

Rape and Torture

Depictions of Violence in J. M. Coetzee's *Waiting for the Barbarians* and *Disgrace*

Kathrine Maria Willett Jansen



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Rape and Torture: Depictions of violence in J. M. Coetzee's *Waiting for the Barbarians* and *Disgrace*.

Kathrine M. W. Jansen

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Contents

1	Introduction	1
1.1	Problem statement	1
1.2	South Africa and Apartheid	2
1.3	Coetzee in the South African Context	4
1.4	<i>Waiting for the Barbarians</i> and <i>Disgrace</i>	5
1.5	The novels' relevance to issues in contemporary society in general and South Africa in particular	8
1.6	Theory	9
1.7	Method	10
1.8	Recapitulation of problem statement	11
2	Depictions of Violence in <i>Waiting for the Barbarians</i>	12
2.1	Torture	12
2.2	Meet the barbarians	13
2.3	Narrative strategies and the moral issues of representing violence in <i>Waiting for the Barbarians</i>	15
2.4	Coetzee's presentation of torture	17
2.5	The Empire and the barbarians	18
2.6	The Magistrate and the barbarian woman	21
2.7	Said's <i>Orientalism</i> , identity and acts of "othering"	25
2.8	The oppressors and the oppressed	27
3	Depictions of rape in <i>Disgrace</i>	31
3.1	Sexual violence	31
3.2	The South African context	34
3.3	<i>Disgrace</i>	37
3.4	"Not rape, not quite that"	39
3.4.1	Moral neutralization and amnesia	44
3.5	"I'm a dead person"	46
3.6	Race and gender-based violence	49
4	Conclusion	52
	Works cited	58

1 Introduction

1.1 Problem statement

This thesis will examine depictions of violence in two of the South African author J. M. Coetzee's most significant novels, *Waiting for the Barbarians* and *Disgrace*. I posit that, in these novels, violence tends to assume the shape of rape and torture. The thesis will discuss how Coetzee presents these manifestations of violence.

Violent behaviour is also expressed through the relationships among the various characters, since the apparent power structures manifest themselves in these relationships. It will therefore be important to consider the main characters in relation to each other. After having explored how violence is presented in the two novels, I will compare them in a summarizing conclusion. Since this conclusion is comparative, it will enable me to demonstrate how the various facets and manifestations of rape and torture are linked to each other, thus strengthening the importance of the theme of violence.

By "theme" I here mean a significant element of content, and thus also a constituent element of the novels' thematics. While the thematics of the two novels consist of many themes that are linked, I will argue that, as indicated already, the theme of violence is particularly important. The emphasis of this thesis, however, is on Coetzee's depictions – his narrative presentations – of violence. This means that the thesis is concerned with form, assuming that there is a close link between form and content.

Moreover, although the thesis is text-oriented, it does not follow that I consider contextual and historical aspects as unimportant. On the contrary, I believe there is a link, although an indirect one, between fiction and reality. Coetzee's fiction is anchored in a historical reality, a reality which he refers to and which his novels indirectly reflects. I will therefore consider contextual and historical aspects as central. Consequently, I will include these aspects in my discussion. The next section will therefore give an account of the South African context.

1.2 South Africa and Apartheid

Waiting for the Barbarians and *Disgrace* are two of the most important literary contributions to discussions of important issues during apartheid and after apartheid. It is therefore beneficiary to consider both novels in the South African context, and it is also helpful, even necessary, to relate them to main events and turning-points in South African history. White minority rule was legally introduced in South Africa in 1948 and was not abolished until 1994. The period of apartheid marked the country with social and racial unrest, and was a detrimental stain on South Africa's rap sheet. In theory, the intention behind segregation was that the system would ensure different groups' possibility for parallel and independent development. In practice, apartheid was used to maintain white minority rule in politics, economy, and the cultural sphere.

This complex phenomenon was not of new age. When examining the historical background for racial discrimination in South Africa it is urgent to look at the time leading up to the legal changes in 1948. The cornerstone for apartheid was set during the earliest European immigration under the leadership of the Dutch Jan van Riebeeck in the 1600s (Meskell and Weiss 88). The Dutch East India Company established a settlement at the Cape of Good Hope in 1652. Initially, its purpose was to serve as a pitch stop for traders and travelers to stock up on necessary supplies for further journeys. The territory proved to be rich on mineral resources. The British arrived in South African, and Dutch, territory after 1795 and fought for land; exploitation and trade escalated further after the discovery of diamonds and gold. Mining for these valuable minerals was one of the main industries after colonial settlement, which had been a powerful pull factor for European migration and settlement. Indigenous peoples suffered under colonial expansion. Under European rule, the Cape experienced an importation of slaves, unlike the rest of the African continent where work forces were removed to be relocated elsewhere (Meskell and Weiss 89). The slave trade was one of the most significant aspects of cultural transformation affected by eighteenth-century capitalist world economy in the Americas and in Africa.

Colonialism has proven to be one of the main reasons for the deeply rooted inequalities present today. Colonialism and capitalism have spread across the world and continue to remold human societies. South Africa was no exception. Thus, racial segregation has had a long history in South Africa, starting with the encounters between Africans and European colonialists. For numerous years, segregation was taking place in South Africa as

the colonizers subdued indigenous peoples and used them as labour force. The segregation system was not, however, institutionalized until the formation of the Union of South Africa in 1910, and in 1948 in particular. The rules and regulations from 1910 favoured the white South African population, while tightening the state control over the black population. After the National Party won the 1948 election, apartheid policy was implemented.

Under the apartheid system, the people of South Africa were hierarchically divided into four sections: white, coloured, Asians, and black. White South Africans or people of European descent (mainly from the Netherlands or Britain) were the dominant minority, while other races were seen and treated as subordinate. Statistics showing disproportionate treatment from ca. 1978 indicate a preferential treatment for whites. Keeping in mind that the white population was a clear minority, their land allocation was a stunning 87 per cent, compared to the black population's meager 13 per cent. In addition, while the infant mortality rate for blacks in urban areas was 20 per cent and 40 per cent in rural areas, the white had a low 2,7 per cent infant mortality rate (Choksi et al.) Disproportionate treatment was visible in other social areas as well, such as work and housing. Public segregation was also an aspect of apartheid, in which zones were marked up where the black could and could not stay. The persuasive statistics above portray the success of the segregation system, a system upheld by force. After abandoning apartheid, the South African scene of transition was tense, and in several ways it still is.

Today, out of the South African population of approximately 50,5 million people, only 9 per cent are white. The mid-year population estimates indicates that 79,5 per cent of the South African population is black, while the white and coloured population each constitutes 9 per cent of the total (Statistics South Africa- Mid Year population estimates 2011). Nevertheless, the white minority remains the upper class in society. The social differences in a stratified South Africa are so vast that there continues to be an enormous gap between rich and poor today. This gap broadly corresponds with social classes and race affiliation. These social segments have proven to be difficult to erupt. This problem is visible in other countries too, e.g. in Brazil. Segregated social systems are often very set.

1.3 Coetzee in the South African Context

John Maxwell Coetzee established himself as an author during the period of apartheid in South Africa. The white South African novelist and Nobel Laureate's works are as challenging to read as they are impressive, and this is why he has attracted both considerable respect and criticism. He has won the prestigious Booker Prize twice and was awarded the Nobel Prize for Literature in 2003. On the whole, the international reading public has received Coetzee's work favourably. However, some novels have caused furore in his home country. Readers worldwide have traced the unifying themes of race and colonialism in *Waiting for the Barbarians* (1980) and *Disgrace* (1999), and are continuously challenged to question and reflect on aspects of the texts. The novels invite the reader to perform a self-interrogation on different ethical dimensions. Thus, even though these two novels are works of fiction, they have served as an excellent comment on the power structures inherently present in South Africa, both during and after apartheid. In addition, Coetzee has a well-known reluctance to speak directly about his work. Thus, his intentions or personal meanings can be difficult to grasp. Yet it does not follow that his authorial meaning is inaccessible.

Coetzee is a very private person, i.e. details on his life are scarce. After he emigrated to Australia in 2002, only three years after the publication of *Disgrace*, he moved his narrative style towards a more autobiographical direction. Born in 1940, he grew up as a white English-speaking South African surrounded by cultural conflict. Africa has been a continent of numerous tribes and kingdoms. Today, South Africa recognizes eleven official languages. African multilingualism was promoted through the democratic Constitution of 1997. In addition, there is an amount of unofficial languages as well. To some extent, this cultural diversity is the result of colonialism, i.e. people have voluntarily or involuntarily migrated, and national borders have been rearranged and redrawn by different colonial powers.

Although Coetzee's parents were not of British but rather Boer descent, they spoke English at home. Still, he could communicate with family members in Afrikaans. With one foot in each camp, his linguistic skills made it possible for him to work as an active translator of Afrikaans and Dutch literature ("J. M. Coetzee – Biography"). However, his personal identity is difficult to pinpoint when it comes to affiliation and his sense of belonging. Coetzee was educated in South Africa and the United States. He studied at the University of Cape Town where he obtained his Master's degree, and moved to England working as a

programmer. Returning to academia, he moved to the United States and finished his doctoral dissertation. After Coetzee's application for permanent residence in the US was denied, he returned to South Africa (Head 2).

Published 1999, *Disgrace* became internationally acclaimed and widely discussed. Its reception in South Africa, however, was lukewarm. Even though many readers and critics argued that *Disgrace* was stuck in the past, I would counter that the novel was actually ahead of its time. *Disgrace* presents a gang rape of a white woman by black men. Coetzee's narrative presentation of this fraught issue made the novel controversial, and many readers strongly disliked it. The 1990s was a period of transition, and the building of a "new" South Africa focused on the epithet "the Rainbow Nation". This harmonizing concept pointed to an embracing of the multiracial population and solidarity. When Coetzee presented a bleak drawing of South Africa, there were bound to be reactions. The African National Congress (ANC) in post-apartheid South Africa questioned Coetzee's motive on this matter and accused him of promoting racial hatred, while condemning the novel's depiction of stereotype black violence against whites. In this way, some believed Coetzee did not participate in the collective nation building and strongly criticized him for it. What is interesting to note is that, paradoxically, while the strict censorship during the apartheid regime never held back or rejected any of Coetzee's critical works. Post-apartheid South Africa and ANC criticized him strongly and "referred to *Disgrace* as an example of racist ideology" (Vold IX). Whether or not his decision to immigrate to Australia was affected by the reception of *Disgrace*, we can only speculate (Vold IX).

1.4 *Waiting for the Barbarians* and *Disgrace*

Violence is an unpleasant and recurrent theme in Coetzee's work, and also one of the most criticized and debated. Both *Waiting for the Barbarians* and *Disgrace* explore violence. However, there are differences concerning narrative methods in the novels. This is evident through the author's use of first-person narration in *Waiting for the Barbarians* and third-person narration in *Disgrace*. First-person narration is a device to convey the narrator's thoughts as it has combined the function of narrator and character. In *Disgrace*, third-person narration allows the narrator to stay outside of the plot, "even though he is also in the text" (Lothe 21). These narrative methods are closely linked to what Coetzee is trying to illustrate, something I will discuss in the following chapters. That being said, the reader follows the

protagonists' reflection on events that take place and their perspectives. The reader follows the Magistrate and David Lurie's personal awakenings. The accounts of the three other female characters who experience oppression and violence are significantly missing. There is only one exception where one of the female characters provides some insight on what happened to her. The little we learn is uttered through dialogues; the rest is dominated by the male protagonist's thoughts and assumptions.

Published in 1980, *Waiting for the Barbarians* is often read as an allegory of oppressor and oppressed. It is a powerful novel, reminding us of our past history while serving an alarming foretelling of the future. The reader is introduced to the Magistrate who runs the affairs of a tiny frontier settlement of an unknown empire. Despite being a servant of the Empire, he is ignoring the approaching war between the barbarians and his own. The war is initiated, and further steps are taken, by the Empire in fear of the other. The barbarians do not hold the barbaric nature they are believed to hold. Rather, they are nomads who relocate as the Empire is stretching out. One day, the interrogation experts arrive. Colonel Joll and Warrant Officer Mandel have come to find and interrogate barbarians in order to map out the threat they are up against, by any means necessary. The Magistrate is hovering on the periphery of the situation, avoiding conflict, and turning a blind eye to the gruesome treatment of the captives. Additionally, he has been fraternizing with the enemy, i.e. he has kept a barbarian woman in his bed and in the end returned her to her own people. In this way, he has had direct contact with the enemy. There can be no doubt that the interrogation officer's methods are, to appropriate a key word from Joseph Conrad's short novel *Heart of Darkness*, "unsound". Despite his naïve attempts to ignore what is going on the Magistrate cannot avoid the fact that torture is taking place in his own quarters and in the town square. He has been neglecting his administrative role, and his premises are now taken over by the Empire. He is living through a crisis of conscience as the regime of the Empire ignores justice and decency. After avoiding disagreements with Colonel Joll for some time, he eventually feels forced to question their methods and the outcome of them. The result is that the Magistrate is locked up and tortured as a part of the interrogation procedure, thus suffering the same treatment as the nomads.

In a way the commonly held view of *Waiting for the Barbarians* as an allegory is convincing enough: the colonial encounters in the novel are inextricably intertwined with history, including South African history. There are degrees of correspondence between events

presented in the novel and historical events. As the narratives hold some similarities with historical events, Susan Van Zanten Gallagher suggests that torture and state repression in the 1970s “appears to have inspired the treatment of torture and repression in *Waiting for the Barbarians*” (Head 96). This was in the aftermath of the Soweto riots and the death of Steve Biko under police custody, in 1976 and 1977. Thus the novel can be considered to be an illustration of the colonization of South Africa, and the African continent. However, the depictions are not restricted to one time and place. There are parallels to other empires and colonial forces throughout history, e.g. the Roman Empire. The strategies applied by the colonizing power in the novel are universal tactics and methods of war. It is a classic portrayal of the oppressor and oppressed.

This said, if by “allegory” we mean a narrative in which the action corresponds quite directly to recognizable actions and events in the real world, then *Waiting for the Barbarians* is perhaps not, or not only, an allegory. For there is an enigmatic quality about this novel. In a way it seems almost timeless, and it is possessed of elements of legend and of parable. If considered as a parable, *Waiting for the Barbarians* may be not just an illustration or allegory (as suggested above) but also a kind of riddle – a literary text asking difficult questions rather than providing reassuring answers (Lothe 109).

In contrast, *Disgrace* is set in another time and place, both of which are here much more specific. As we shall see, however, the novel deals with some of the same themes as *Waiting for the Barbarians*. Coetzee involves us in David Lurie’s struggle “to defend his own and his daughter’s honour in the new circumstances that have arisen in South Africa after the collapse of white supremacy” (“The Nobel Prize in Literature 2003 - Press Release”). As indicated already, the novel received substantial praise and criticism after its publication. David Lurie is a man who has put himself in disgrace by abusing his authority and trust as a professor at the Cape Technical University. He has taken advantage of one of his female students. When the word is out, he is put in front of a committee hearing. He will not give a confession or reform himself through counseling, but claims to have become a “servant of Eros” (*D* 52). As he is discharged from his position at the university, he leaves to the town of Salem in order to visit his daughter Lucy. Not long after arriving, Lurie and his daughter are attacked at her home. All the dogs in Lucy’s kennel are executed except one, while Lurie is beaten, locked into the bathroom and set on fire. Somewhere else in the house, Lucy is being raped by three young black men and boys. The multiple rape of a white woman by black men

is a focal point, which I will discuss in some detail in chapter 3. It turns out that Lurie and Lucy have very different views on how the attack should be dealt with, and their relationship is put to a test. Their opposite views are rooted in their generations. While Lurie comes to represent the old colonial racist attitudes, Lucy represents new attitudes as she is trying to cope in post- colonial and post-apartheid South Africa, determined to stay. She seems to have accepted that it was “history speaking through the rapists” (D 156).

1.5 The novels’ relevance to issues in contemporary society in general and South Africa in particular

Waiting for the Barbarians and *Disgrace* are works of notable importance and pressing actuality. The narratives are universal and realistic in the sense that they expose historical, and recurrent, acts of crime that also occur in the real world. Major themes in the novels evolve around the processes of racism and acts of othering. There are instances of repressing violence around the world every day. Coetzee exemplifies this by reminding the reader of their connection to reality and how they often go unnoticed by the general public. In this manner, he reintroduces rape and torture in cultural debates. Such violence is detrimental in that the victim is oppressed, subdued, and psychologically colonized by the oppressor. Othering creates negative attitudes and gaps between people of different origin, through identity construction and us-against-the-other mentality. The reasons for such behaviour will be examined later. What the novels clearly have in common is that they illustrate the consequences of abuse of power and of a fundamentally racist view of human beings. Both *Waiting for the Barbarians* and *Disgrace* deal with issues concerning race and gender. Coetzee is able to unveil unpleasant problems that people tend to repress purposely or turn the other cheek to. This seems to be one of his intentions as well: to remind us of suppressed atrocities and abuses of power. The issues he illustrates are pressing issues worldwide, demonstrating a widespread disregard of human rights. Since the colonial era, the world map has been altered, but oppressive powers are still very much present. Although they have assumed new forms, it does not follow that they cause less damage.

Racism and acts of othering portrayed in *Waiting for the Barbarians* are similar to current attitudes and relationships today. This has been seen historically during the colonial era, and still exists between the developed and less developed countries in the world. The same is visible with the case of the rape of Lucy Lurie in *Disgrace*. Rape occurs within

families, in different institutions or as an unprovoked attack. Several instances of sexual violence have received international attention during the first months of 2013. In South Africa and India in particular, young women and girls have been victims of grotesque sexual violence, and later died of the consequences. This horrifying reality is of particular importance and interest to me, and shows the actuality of Coetzee's themes. Even though, as indicated already, *Waiting for the Barbarians* and *Disgrace* are clearly linked to the South African context, both novels illustrate pressing issues worldwide and a fundamental disregard of human rights. Torture and rape are problems that need to be brought into daylight, and an increased awareness of the use of extensive force and abuse of power is urgently needed.

1.6 Theory

In addition to the studies of Coetzee and of South African history referred to above, my work on this thesis has been aided by two trends or groups of theory: narrative theory and postcolonial studies. Narrative theory is a significant aspect of the thesis's theoretical basis because it deals with, and explains, how a story is told. In this manner, the relation between form and content is important to note. When it comes to narrative theory, I will draw on Jakob Lothe's account in *Narrative in Fiction and Film*. This is because terms such as author, narrator, and character are important components of narrative fiction – and also of discussions of such fiction. Communication rely on how the narrative is written. Because of the close link between form and content in Coetzee's novels, I will focus on narrative strategies, instruments and devices, discussing how they operate and evaluating their thematic effects.

Postcolonial studies is a term for the study of culture, especially literature, in former colonies. It examines the relationship between the old colonial powers and the former colonies, i.e. the West and the Third World. Both postcolonial literature and postcolonial theory ask questions about ethnicity and nation, as well as ruling and marginalizing techniques. I believe the practices Coetzee illustrates concerning violence can be better understood in light of Edward W. Said's critique of Oriental scholarship, and I therefore wish to tie some of his work to my examination. An influential critic and author, Said became well known internationally for his book *Orientalism* (1978), a seminal study that contributed significantly to the formation of postcolonial studies. By stating that Oriental scholarship has been, and to some extent still is, tied to imperialist societies and attitudes, he examines the relationship between the West and the East. Secondly, I will turn to Kelly Oliver who also

deals with processes of racism and othering in her *The Colonization of Psychic Space: A Psychoanalytic Social Theory of Oppression* (1958). Oliver applies a strategy of connecting rape to other forms of oppression, arguing that we can speak of “psychic colonization”. These theorists will substantiate my examination of *Waiting for the Barbarians* and *Disgrace*. By applying Oliver’s theory on colonization of the psychic space, I will argue that Coetzee illustrates colonizing violence in his two narratives.

1.7 Method

This thesis will aim to investigate how violence is illustrated in Coetzee’s *Waiting for the Barbarians* (1980) and *Disgrace* (1999). As indicated already, I posit that, in these novels, violence tends to assume the shape of torture and rape. In order to compare violence, I plan to examine the context, purpose, and effect of torture and rape in the two novels. After having examined the power dynamics in each of the novels, I will sum up each chapter by focusing on the context, purpose, and effect of violence. This method will enable me to demonstrate how the various facets and manifestations of rape and torture are linked to each other, thus strengthening the importance of the theme of violence. I will examine the ways in which victims of torture and rape are oppressed and abjected, with particular focus on the power dynamics between the colonizers and the colonized.

My thesis will consist of four chapters, of which the first is an introduction to John Maxwell Coetzee and a placing of the two narratives in the South African context. Doing so will create a framework for the two novels I will examine and the thesis itself. As both novels convey states of social and racial unrest, my main focus will be on Coetzee’s representation of torture and sexual violence. In the second chapter, I will devote attention to the power dynamics in *Waiting for the Barbarians*, concentrating on the scenes of torture. The third chapter will evolve around Coetzee’s *Disgrace* and the two events of sexual violence. As Coetzee’s narrative strategies are important in conveying violence in both novels, I will identify and discuss a range of relevant and illustrative textual passages. I believe that this method will further substantiate my examination because narrative strategies are significant linguistic constructions that convey literary meaning. Examining manifestations of violence in each novel, I will sum up my findings at the end of each chapter. I will focus on the context, purpose, and effect of violence in each novel, a focus that will be a part of my method. These three aspects will be an important contribution when comparing and commenting on

Coetzee's illustrations of violence. My concluding chapter will compare the two novels and affirm my findings. I will compare the different aspects of context, purpose, and effect of violence from both novels.

1.8 Recapitulation of problem statement

To recapitulate, this thesis will examine how violence is portrayed in Coetzee's novels *Waiting for the Barbarians* and *Disgrace*. In these novels, violence tends to assume the shape of torture and rape. Examining depictions of violence in these novels will show how violent behaviour is expressed through the relationships between the various characters. These relationships are also apparent where the power structures manifest themselves. An examination of the main characters in relation to each other will therefore be necessary.

2 Depictions of Violence in *Waiting for the Barbarians*

2.1 Torture

Torture is an important theme in *Waiting for the Barbarians*. The colonial war machine of the Empire in the novel is depicted as an all-absorbing entity and nonnegotiable requirement: either one is with it or against it. John Maxwell Coetzee has stated that this novel is about torture and the impact of such violence on “the life of a man of conscience” (Gallagher 278). Violence appears in many forms and is related to the title word “Barbarians” in several ways. A common denominator in the novel is that it is used as a means in the interrogation practises of the Third Bureau. My main focus will be on torture in the novel, its representation, forms, and themes implications. With this emphasis, I will begin by introducing the text. Next, I aim to explore some of the narrative strategies and the moral issue of representing violence, as they are significant strategies in conveying violence in the novel. Furthermore, I will then provide additional examples from the text that displays torture. In my discussion, I find it useful to bring in other aspects. Torture can be better understood in light of Edward W. Said’s theoretical criticism on imperialism and torture. After examining torture, I wish to reflect on this in connection to some of Said’s main ideas. In a way, Said’s criticism corresponds, in a different kind of discourse, to what Coetzee illustrates through fiction. Criticising how Oriental scholarship has been, and still is, tied to imperialist societies and attitudes, Said’s examination of the West and the East will be an important supplement for my discussion. The incidents of oppressive violence I wish to focus on are the torture of the nomadic people, and the torture of the Magistrate. Being closely connected, these relationships and offenses should be examined in relation to one another. I also want to examine the relationship between the Magistrate and the barbarian woman. This is because their connection is complex and similar to the rest of the relationships. Structurally, I will have to separate the two cases of torture from each other, before bringing them together in order to comment on my findings of Coetzee’s depictions of violence in the novel.

Indeed, torture is a more common practice than what we would imagine. There are events in the novel in which characters are exposed to physical suffering, particularly and interestingly, the nomadic people and the Magistrate. The Magistrate has run the frontier settlement for

decades, while ignoring the impending war between the barbarians and the Empire. As interrogation experts arrive, the tiny frontier settlement is taken over by the Empire and its practises. The Magistrate sympathizes with the victims of torture. After the interrogation officers have left, he initiates a relationship with a barbarian woman who has been left behind. Fraternizing with the enemy, and openly questioning and rebelling against the ways of the Empire, the Magistrate ends up in prison where he is isolated, tortured and accused of crimes against the state. The effects of torture rest heavily on his conscience. Unwilling to become a part of the immorality that is being displayed, he tries to act according to his sense of right and wrong. A common denominator of torture is that it is used as a means of interrogation. The Empire and the territory in the novel are unknown. In this way, we cannot link the narrative to Coetzee's home country as we can reading *Disgrace*. We should rather consider its violence in general, as a case that could occur within any nation. As regards the characters in *Waiting for the Barbarians*, the torturers are the same while the victims change. Torture is applicable to all peoples, even people of the same nationality as the torturers, as long as the cause legitimizes the act. According to Colonel Joll and Warrant Officer Mandel, the truth of a brooding threat shall be revealed by any means necessary. As the novel can be interpreted as an allegory of oppressor and oppressed, the power dynamics in the novel are inherently important. Several people are drawn into violent crimes, which constitute numerous instances of physical torment against innocent victims. Performing such targeted violence means deliberately inflicting severe pain on a human being or animal with a purpose. In this regard, the Magistrate's first encounter with Colonel Joll is not only noteworthy but decisive.

2.2 Meet the barbarians

The very first description of Joll is about his sunglasses, how he is wearing dark disk over his eyes. The Magistrate remarks that he cannot see Joll's eyes, but Joll "can see through them" (WB 1). Next to not knowing his reason for being there, the sunglasses add to the mystery. With them, the Magistrate cannot read Joll's face properly. As Joll has not stated his business, the Magistrate, as the administrator of the frontier settlement, shows him around. As Joll sees it, the Magistrate has ignored the approaching war between the Empire and the barbarians while being in service of the Empire. In a conversation with Joll, he introduces and deconstructs the definition of "barbarian" given by Joll. The Magistrate utters the first mention of the word "barbarian" as he is showing Joll around on the premises. It seems to be

an internalized phrase, which is rather empty and rehearsed on his behalf. As they are entering a room with two prisoners, he gives this explanation to Joll:

“These are the only prisoners we have taken for a long time,” I say. “A coincidence: normally we would not have any barbarians at all to show you. This so-called banditry does not amount to much. They steal a few sheep or cut out a pack-animal from a train. Sometimes we raid them in return. They are mainly destitute tribespeople with tiny flocks of their own living along the river”. (WB 4)

Thus, the Magistrate demonstrates the fallacy of the Empire’s label on the nomadic people from early on. Yet he is caught between a rock and a hard place, being a man of the Empire while simultaneously disagreeing with the Empire’s official policy. The Magistrate attempts to disarm the situation while he is noting that the prisoners “are mainly destitute tribespeople with tiny flocks of their own living along the river” (WB 4). He goes against a widely held imperialistic view, and consequently distinguishes himself from his social group. Colonel Joll, and by implication the Empire, understands the term “barbarian” in a particular, but general, way. It is particular in the sense that it is a fixed term with very few alterations. It is general in the sense of usage, how it is applied to a range of different peoples of different cultures. In this regard, the novel’s title is significant as it invites an ambiguous interpretation. The title is equivocal in that while some of the victims are believed to be barbarians, the Empire’s methods of interrogation are more than questionable as well. Thus, the title *Waiting for the Barbarians* invites different interpretations.

The novel’s title, *Waiting for the Barbarians*, was originally borrowed from Constantine Cavafy’s poem with the same title. This poem also gave inspiration for Samuel Beckett’s play *Waiting for Godot*. The Oxford Dictionary defines the noun barbarian as “a member of a people not belonging to one of the great civilizations” (Oxford Dictionaries), such as the Greeks or Romans. The term functions as a noun, an adjective and in connection to verbs. As an adjective it is used in a derogatory way, relating to ancient barbarians who were seen as brutish and uncultured (Oxford Dictionary). Continuing to see a group of people as the “other” reinforces one’s own identity. In this case, the Empire sees themselves as great, civilized and unconquerable. Thus, the use of the derogatory term “barbarian” immediately distinguishes other people as members of uncivilized groups; the uncivilized are often described as savage, brutal and primitive. With the development of the plot, the title therefore invites the reader to question the identity of the true barbarian. This is because actions can also be “barbaric”. Torture, as an action, is barbaric. Totalitarian regimes, such as the Empire, view themselves as civilized and cultured. However, the way to triumph is not free of

obstacles. In fact, the actual road to imperial glory is an important aspect, and moving along this road regimes behave like barbarians, despite the effort to appear the opposite. In this regard, the use of the term “barbarian” needs to be reconsidered as the barbarian within seems closer and far more dangerous than those lurking outside the frontier gate. The irony is that Colonel Joll, the defender of the Empire who accuses others to be barbaric, behaves like a barbarian himself. In this manner, the representation of the “barbarian” transitions from an emerging unknown exterior figure to the savage within. After establishing the main focus on the introduction of the literary text, the successive paragraphs will consider Coetzee’s narrative strategies and the moral issue of representing torture in literature.

2.3 Narrative strategies and the moral issues of representing violence in *Waiting for the Barbarians*

The narration in *Waiting for the Barbarians* is important. As indicated in the previous chapter, narration is significant to what the author is trying to illustrate, and relies on how the text is written and communicated (Lothe 6). Coetzee’s narrative strategies include the use of present tense and first-person narrator. The principal function of present tense is that it expresses the actions or states at the time of speaking. The effect of present tense is that the discourse becomes more immediate and alive while pulling the reader into the narrative. The Magistrate is both a character and a narrative device. This narrative construction enables us to view imperial attitudes, and the effect of torture on “the life of a man of conscience” (Gallagher 278). This is possible through the Magistrate’s internal monologue. The use of first-person narrator is a device to convey the thoughts of the narrator, as it has combined the function of narrator and character. Thus, the Magistrate is speaking for and about himself.

As the Magistrate is the focalizer in the novel; the information and reflections we receive are filtered through him. He also leads the reader throughout the novel. It is his perspective that enables us to take a step into the character and follow the unravelling of his struggle with conscience. The Magistrate battles with his conscience throughout the novel when he becomes aware of the atrocities performed by the Third Bureau’s agents, Colonel Joll and Warrant Officer Mandel. We participate in his interior monologue as well as his interaction with other characters. His character occupies a privileged position and he is marked by white, imperialist attitudes. This is evident through his language and perspective, which are problematic. For his perspective is also the perspective of the Empire, i.e. he has

internalized the Empire's attitudes. The very beginning of the novel is significant on this note concerning his first encounter with Joll. He struggles to understand the circumstances in which people allow themselves to torture others. At the end of the novel, he does not blame the torturers but attempts to understand how the interrogation experts can eat after exerting violence, and wonders whether they go through any cleansing rituals to free themselves from the guilt of their actions. Eventually, he comes to terms with the fact that he was a piece of the puzzle for decades and an abettor of the Empire. Fulfilling his duties, the Magistrate took care of the administrative duties "until one day events overtook [him]" (WB 153). The reader joins the Magistrate on his journey; this is why his role as a focalizer is important. The narration is a precise portrayal of torture and its effects on people - an effect that is all consuming. Thus, the author's literary constructions and choices are well-considered devices in conveying torture and its effect on "the life of a man of conscience" (Gallagher 278). Torture is an act of oppression and, as I shall discuss later, results in "othering".

Undertaking the task of writing about torture is not a straightforward matter; finding a middle ground can be challenging. Coetzee has taken this issue into consideration: as violence has entered popular culture, how realistically should torture be depicted? Often, human beings have a fascination for the horrific and illegal. Being mindful of this, authors should consider the moral issues of representing violence. That said, a discussion on the effects of this trend is outside the scope of this thesis. Yet we can note that the subconscious demand for violence is not decreasing. In literature, a middle ground between glamorizing and trivializing a violent character should be sought, especially with torture. On this matter

Coetzee objects to realistic depiction of torture in fiction because he thinks that the novelist participates vicariously in the atrocities, validates the acts of torture, assists the state in terrorizing and paralyzing people by showing its oppressive methods in detail. (Gallagher 277)

According to Coetzee, the author can participate in the creation, redistribution and maintenance of torture through depictions of it. He has himself, however, worked out some "tentative strategies for the novelist confronted with the question of torture" (Gallagher 277). The challenge is therefore, how to avoid showing oppressive methods in detail, while inviting the reader to "imagine torture and death on one's own terms" (Gallagher 277:13).

Having considered the beginning of the novel, Coetzee's narrative strategies, and the moral issue of representing violence, I would now like to proceed by giving illustrative examples of passages with torture and how it is practised. I will proceed to discuss how

torture is presented in the action that follows. As indicated, the power structures are laid out during the very first encounter between Colonel Joll and the Magistrate during the very first few pages of the novel. I will proceed to discuss how torture is presented in the action that follows. An outline of the relationship between the Empire and the barbarians, and the Magistrate and the barbarian woman, will form the basis for my discussion.

2.4 Coetzee's presentation of torture

The existence of torture is widespread, making the theme in *Waiting for the Barbarians* highly relevant. The history of torture is traced all the way back to antiquity. Amnesty International states that “people were tortured and otherwise ill-treated in at least 101 countries, in many cases taking part in anti-government demonstrations” in 2011 (Amnesty International). With a widespread existence of torture, non-governmental organisations such as Amnesty International and Human Rights Watch have taken upon themselves the task to reveal breaches of human rights worldwide. Thus, patterns of torture are old while the rhetoric is new. Throughout history, governments or religious groups around the world have carried out torture, both sporadically and systematically. It is not a technique confined to a few countries or one continent in particular. In the modern world, systematic torture has been common circumstances in armed conflicts or war, notably in Nazi-Germany and the Soviet Union.

Annual reports state that torture is widely practised in Africa, the Middle East and Latin America. However, the Western world should refrain from sanctimoniousness. Allegations of enhanced interrogation techniques are made against Western countries and their treatment of political prisoners. Due to ethnocentric attitudes, an “unforgiving illusion of entitlement and privilege leads to self-righteous killing in the name of justice, democracy and freedom” (Oliver XXIII). In addition, “the covert killing practises of the West are rationalized as necessary to protect freedom, while the same practises by our ‘enemies’ are considered terrorism and barbarism” (Oliver 197). This observation corresponds with Coetzee’s novel in that the means are excused by the cause. This is very much evident in *Waiting for the Barbarians*. While the Empire’s methods are considered as justified and even necessary, measures taken by the barbarians are seen as evil. This overview functions as a backdrop for the examination of the relationship between the Empire and the barbarians, and the Magistrate and the barbarian woman.

2.5 The Empire and the barbarians

In the name of the Empire, different groups of people in the novel are robbed of their human rights and tortured. *Waiting for the Barbarians* portrays the all-absorbing maelstrom of colonial powers. It also portrays the power structures between the characters, which are consequently displayed in the acts of violence. In the novel, an unnamed empire is fighting the unknown barbarian lurking outside the walls of their frontier settlement. As the colonial power has expanded, the nomadic people have been forced to relocate. Paranoia, an unspecified fear in the capitol, evolves and spreads out to frontier settlements. The Empire decides to embark on a campaign in order to prevent any barbarian attack on their territory. The reader is introduced to Joll and the barbarians at the very beginning of the novel. Trying to get information from their prisoners, the Magistrate describes Joll as a “gentleman visiting us from the capital. He visits all the forts along the frontier. His work is to find out the truth. That is all he does. He finds out the truth” (WB 3). This turns out to be a rather naïve and gravely mistaken description. Things are about to change.

Joll’s methods in the search for truth are problematic. The “truth” he is after is not necessarily the actual truth, but his version of it. “Confession” would be a better description. This confession is available only after long periods of interrogation, in which torture is Joll’s technique. He is willing to extort information beyond the point of correct information, but rather a false confession in order for the pain to stop. When the Magistrate asks Colonel Joll how he knows he has been given the actual truth after such treatment, he answers that there is a certain tone in a man’s voice when he speaks the truth. “A certain tone enters the voice of a man who is telling the truth. Training and experience teach us to recognize that tone” (WB 5). As the Magistrate wonders how this is even possible, Joll lets him in on the tactics of torture:

“I am speaking only of a special situation now, I am speaking of a situation in which I am probing for the truth, in which I have to exert pressure to find it. First I get lies, you see – this is what happens – first lies, then pressure, then more lies, then more pressure, then the break, then more pressure, then the truth. That is how you get the truth”. (WB 5)

Consequently, the Magistrate gathers from his conversation with Joll that “pain is truth” (WB 5) and that the actual “truth” is not necessarily the one they are looking for.

Joll is trying to find information about the Barbarians’ mobilization against the Empire. The prisoners that the Magistrate shows Joll in the first chapter suffer from torture, and an old man is killed during interrogations. The official report states that “during the

course of the interrogation contradictions became apparent in the prisoner's testimony. Confronted with these contradictions, the prisoner became enraged and attacked the investigating officer" (WB 6). Apparently, the old man "fell heavily against the wall" and "efforts to revive him were unsuccessful" (WB 6). After inquiries, and seeing the condition of the dead body lying in the barracks, the Magistrate realises that the official report is untruthful. Falling heavily against a wall after a scuffle does not result in his face being "caked with blood" and his "lips are crushed and drawn back, the teeth are broken. One eye is rolled back, the other eye-socket is a bloody hole" (WB 7). False confessions, given by the surviving prisoner, have severe consequences. It ignites a fire that will spread quickly across the Empire and give reason for additional measures. The Empire becomes more certain in its case, which leads them on to further interrogations and campaigns. Together with the Magistrate, the reader witnesses the comprehensive ill treatment of the nomadic people. This takes a toll on his conscience, and the hierarchy of rank has been underlined. In this manner, the power dynamics corresponds with the instances of violence. After understanding what their interrogation techniques really entail, the Magistrate starts to see the contours of a nasty business. He felt "[his] heart grow heavy. [He] never wished to be drawn into this. Where it will end [he] do[es] not know" (WB 8). Little does he foresee what is yet to come. He will eventually be overpowered in the process. The illustration above introduces further actions of torture, where violence escalates.

After weeks of campaigning, Joll returns triumphantly with prisoners. A whisper runs through the crowd as they gather to see what the buzz is about. The Magistrate notes what is happening in front of their eyes:

Behind him comes another trooper trailing a rope; and at the end of the rope, tied neck to neck, comes a file of men, barbarians, stark naked, holding their hands up to their faces in an odd way as though one and all are suffering from toothache. For a moment I am puzzled by the posture, by the tiptoeing eagerness with which they follow their leader, till I catch a glint of metal and at once comprehend. A simple loop of wire runs through the flesh of each man's hands and through holes pierced in his cheeks. "It makes them as meek as lambs," I remember being told by a soldier who had once seen the trick: "they think of nothing but how to keep still." My heart grows sick. (WB 113)

At first, the people of the frontier settlement do not understand what is to come of this public spectacle; they are lingering to see what is happening next. The Magistrate knows the ways of the Empire. He is trying to leave the crowd, an attempt to avoid being "contaminated by the atrocity that is about to be committed" or being filled with hatred against those responsible (WB 114). Joll smears dust on the backs of the barbarians, writing the word "ENEMY" on

each prisoner. This public spectacle underlines the gap between the people of the frontier settlement and the nomadic people. The contrast is intensified when a young girl is encouraged to join the flogging of the prisoners. As the public torture proceeds and the colonel eventually picks up a hammer and a point has been reached for the Magistrate. This is the first time he feels he has to intervene somehow. First feeble, he gathers strength in his voice and shouts “No! No! No!” (WB 116). This is one of the events in which he publicly separates himself from the rest of his social group, both Joll and the crowd. The spectators shift from being petrified and to joining in on what has become a game. For Joll, a public display of torture proves to be a rather efficient method. The fear of standing up to a violent power lies within the human instinct, based on the fear of pain and death. Thus, no one reacts when the Magistrate is beaten. The spectacle of state-approved torture proceeds. Using the term “state-approved torture” I do not intend to claim that torture is allowed by law or preferred. But, the law can be manipulated, which is the case in *Waiting for the Barbarians* (Moses 119). A public display of torture, victimizing the nomads and the Magistrate, serves as a warning to the rest of the frontier settlement.

The hierarchical structures between the characters are deeply affected by the Empire as the ultimate authority and power. In the novel, the Empire represents an overreaching power in which people of different social ranks and ethnicities are subordinate. As the deputy, Colonel Joll is the personification of imperialist power. On behalf of the Empire, he is the executive power in command of interrogating those who might have information about a barbarian attack. Next in rank is his Warrant Officer Mandel, Joll’s right hand man. His task is to serve as the executor of state-approved torture, another extension of the Empire, only lower in rank. He is a foot soldier with power, not unaccustomed to getting his hands dirty. Below these extreme characters is the Magistrate with his administrative responsibility and then the rest of the citizens of the frontier town. The characters above are hierarchically divided after rank within a social group. At the very bottom we find nomadic people and aboriginal fisher folk, or barbarians, as the Empire labels them. They are low in rank due to ethnic affiliation. As a victim of torture, the Magistrate is humiliated within his own social group when he stands up to Joll and Mandel, and by implication the Empire. Being publicly tortured, the Magistrate is almost reduced to the same status as the barbarians. With decades of taking part in the Empire’s oppressive ways, he has himself been oppressed through torture by his own group. Therefore, he has moved to a place in between. This results in a profound disillusionment on his part. In this section I have provided examples on the relationship

between the Empire and the barbarian victims from the passages of torture. The following section will do the same, while focusing on the Magistrate's relationship to the barbarian woman. Their relationship evolves in between Joll's visits to the frontier settlement.

2.6 The Magistrate and the barbarian woman

The relationship between the Magistrate and the barbarian woman is complex. Before he is placed in the barracks, isolated and tortured, the Magistrate embarks on a relationship with a barbarian woman. She was brought in for questioning and left behind after the interrogation. Their relationship is closely connected to the Empire, as they both are products of it. The Magistrate has been an abettor of the Empire for many years, living in the frontier town and taking care of his administrative duties. The barbarian woman is also affected by the Empire and made into a product of it. The woman is an imperial creation in the sense that she has been physically and psychologically marked by the ways of the Empire. The Empire has tortured and alienated the barbarian woman, which has ultimately excluded her from her kin. Torture has made her into a new body, i.e. a new person. However, Joll and Mandel are not the only perpetrators in this deed. To a much less violent degree, but significant nonetheless, the Magistrate has participated in the colonization of the woman. There are several reasons for this. First, he is a member and servant of the Empire. Second, his doings derive from a colonial mind-set as a member of the Empire that influences his behaviour. In this manner, it is a matter of causality. His internalization of colonial attitudes ultimately leads him to treat the barbarian woman as his inferior. Yet the protagonist is both an oppressor and an oppressed, i.e. he has a foot in each camp. Before he understands that his treatment of her makes him another extension of the Empire, he keeps the barbarian woman in his bed.

After the torture of the barbarian woman, the Magistrate engages in a semi-platonic relationship with her. As a cleansing ritual, he washes her. It is as though he is trying to wash away the sins done to her, and understand the signs of torture that has been left on her. The ritual of the washing consumes him entirely:

I wash her feet, as before, her legs, her buttocks. My soapy hand travels between her thighs, incuriously, I find. She raises her arms while I wash her armpits. I wash her belly, her breasts. I push her hair aside and wash her neck, her throat. She is patient. I rinse and dry her. She lies on the bed and I rub her body with almond oil. I close my eyes and lose myself in the rhythm of the rubbing, while the fire, piled high, roars in the grate. (WB 32)

The cleansing ritual becomes a passionless obsession in which he feels “no desire to enter this stocky little body” (*WB* 32). Their platonic relationship rests on his need to decipher the barbarian woman’s body. His need for sexual intercourse and intimacy is satisfied by other young women, and this is where he seeks to recover his youth, “in the arms of young women” (*WB* 141). During the washing and oiling, he tries to ask the barbarian woman what was done to her. She simply “shrugs and is silent” (*WB* 31). Still he continues to trace her scars. The Magistrate “relieved her of the shame of begging and installed her in the barracks as a scullery-maid” (*WB* 34). He is aware of the gossip that flourishes, and despite his good intentions he soon comes to realize that she is “his prisoner” (*WB* 60). As a servant of the Empire, he is coloured by a supremacist attitude. Inspired by Franz Fanon, Kelly Oliver suggests that negative effects of the oppressors are internalized by the oppressed, that these affects are “deposited into the bones” of those who have been “othered” (XVIII). This is an important point. The Magistrate’s connection with the Empire rubs off on his relationship with the barbarian woman. In this manner, colonization of psychic space comes from processes of racism and “othering”. Oliver also states that oppression causes “alienation, depression, shame, and anger” (XXI), which the nomadic people, the Magistrate and the barbarian woman are examples of. The Magistrate “did not mean to get embroiled in this” (*WB* 8), but he admits that “the distance between myself and her torturers, I realize, is negligible; I shudder” (*WB* 29). This realization is reached after a long struggle with his connection to the Empire and his conscience. His last good work for the woman is that he brings her back to her kin. On their way to find the nomadic people, the Magistrate has an epiphany. As she sits down and interacts with the men during their quest to find her kin, he sees her as a “witty, attractive young woman” (*WB* 68). This is the first time he sees her as something else than “the old man’s slut” (*WB* 68).

In the novel, the Magistrate illustrates both physical and verbal subordination. The Magistrate’s prejudice prevents him from seeing the barbarian woman as an individual. He bought a silver-fox cub from a trapper, which he keeps in his room. As he cannot let it go, because it would starve, the fox cub stays for a while. In a flurry of amusement the Magistrate offers a joke to the barbarian woman:

Sometimes I see its sharp snout peeking out from the dark corner. Otherwise it is only a noise in the night and a pervasive tang of urine as I wait for it to grow big enough to be disposed of. “People say I keep two wild animals in my rooms, a fox and a girl.” She does not see the joke, or does not like it. Her lips close, her gaze settles rigidly on the wall, I know she is doing her best to glare at me. (*WB* 37)

Comparing her with a wild animal, the Magistrate portrays a subconsciously dominant attitude. As he gets no reaction, the Magistrate understands he crossed the line and inertly takes it back. Her physical appearance is not to his liking either. He says to himself that “she is ugly, ugly” (*WB* 50). Trying to make the best of her situation she is adaptive to the Magistrate’s habits - what he calls submission. He notes that she adjusts to new patterns in his everyday life, and tells himself “that she submits because of her barbarian upbringing” (*WB* 60). She is his way to redemption, cleansing ritual. Their relationship is semi-platonic for a very long time; his washing and rubbing of her body yet feeling no lust. “I behave in some ways like a lover – I undress her, I bathe her, I stroke her, I sleep beside her – but I might equally well tie her to a chair and beat her, it would be no less intimate” (*WB* 46). The small specs of lust he feels are comforted in the company of some of the younger girls who often take male visitors at night. The Magistrate tries to understand the woman, he attempts to decipher her scars and enter her psychologically. And by keeping her in his quarters, he is executing some power over her. She is obsequious from day one until the very last day, where he asks her to come back with him. Her first act of resistance is “No. I do not want to go back to that place” (*WB* 78). Except this statement, she goes with the flow. On his return, the consequence of his affair with the barbarian woman is an overwhelming torture.

When exposed to it, torture and isolation consume the Magistrate and his entire being. Despite being a representative of the Empire, and colonizing the barbarian woman, the Magistrate is made a victim himself. After Joll’s interrogation of an old man and a young woman, the Magistrate takes the woman to his quarters and bed. Her father was tortured and killed in front of her eyes. She herself was tortured to such an extent that it resulted in partially blindness, both her ankles were broken and she was scarred in her face from the tool the interrogators used as a threat to burn her eyeballs. They put the tool “in the coals till it was hot, then they touched you with it, to burn you” (*WB* 44). She witnessed this on other victims of torture, and she was left behind. Trying to explain why she should not be wanted, she “holds up her forefinger, grips it, twists it” (*WB* 29) possibly gesturing that she is broken. She has been made alien to her kin and has always been by race to the people of the frontier settlement. The Magistrate eventually decides to return the barbarian woman to her people. After a long journey under inhospitable weather conditions, they reach the nomads. When the Magistrate and his men return home, Colonel Joll and Mandel are waiting for him. As indicated, the torture of the men on a loop of wire pushed the Magistrate beyond his limit and

he could no longer remain silent. After fraternizing with the enemy, he becomes a victim of the same treatment as the barbarians.

In confinement, the Magistrate's basic human rights are disregarded and neglected. This is strategically intended to humiliate. In response to the Magistrate's condemnation of inhuman treatment, he states that his torturers did not come for information anymore.

They did not come to force the story out of me of what I had said to the barbarians and what the barbarians said to me. So I had no chance to throw the high-sounding words I had already in their faces. They came to my cell to show me the meaning of humanity, and in the space of an hour they showed me a great deal. (WB 126)

In a game of cat and mouse, torture continues haphazardly. The Magistrate is publicly humiliated in the courtyard when he is forced to run around in a circle, Mandel slapping him on his buttocks with a cane if he slackens (WB 127). Soldiers, maids and children watch this public spectacle. He also has to do tricks in front of them, jumping around. This is, however, only a warm-up for what is to come. Upon one occasion, they retrieve him from his cell and tells him to put on a "woman's calico smock" (WB 128) and marches him out of the yard. In the midst of children playing, Mandel starts a game of torment. Under a Mulberry tree they slip a bag over his head and orders him to climb a ladder that has been raised against the tree. At the top of the ladder, they throw a slipknot around his neck and tighten it. As the knot grew tighter, he is strangled and is frightened for what would happen if he slips. Strangled speechless, he feels the blood hammering in his ears (WB 130), and at one moment he loses his hold and dangles in the air. He is taken down, the hood comes off and the slipknot is removed. With his hands bound on his back, the Magistrate is hoisted up in the air again:

... my arms come up behind my back, and as my feet leave the ground I feel a terrible tearing in my shoulders as though whole sheets of muscle are giving way. From my throat comes the first mournful dry bellow, like the pouring of gravel. (WB 132)

This public display of torture is a clear statement. It is yet another example of the Empire saying "you are either with us or against us". It is an act of humiliation as well as alienation, because it separates the Magistrate from the others. He is humiliated and subjugated within his own social group, in the same way as the barbarians are humiliated and subjugated. An intense and paranoid hunt for information has made officers of the Empire turn against their own for the well-being of the Empire and its prospects. He is continually reminded that he is no longer one of them; a gap has opened that cannot be filled.

The Magistrate used to be the administrative head of the frontier settlement, esteemed by some, and living a pleasant and quiet life. They successfully replaced the Magistrate and turned him into an old travelling beggar. Staring all day at empty walls and being the victim of physical violence is taking its toll on the Magistrate. He is living under poor conditions; the cockroaches keep him company at night, drawn by the smell of the toilet bucket in the corner of his cell and bits of food on the floor. Torture and isolation are changing his very being. The effects on his mind and body are detrimental. When he is fed the Magistrate states that “I guzzle my food like a dog. A bestial life is turning me into a beast” (WB 87). He is not tortured the same way as the nomadic people were. Nonetheless, Joll and his assistants are playing a game of cat and mouse with him. They do not intend to kill him, but they are trying to prove a point by showing that they are in control. After fighting for some time, refusing to be one of them, it is not until the very end that the Magistrate sees that he is not that much better than Joll or Mandel.

Now I want to tie Edward Said’s main ideas to my discussion. I believe that the examples can be better understood in light of Said’s critical work. I also believe the novel invites outlined such an appropriation. Said was an influential critic and author, well known for his book *Orientalism*. By stating that Oriental scholarship has been, and still is, tied to imperialist societies and attitudes, he examines the relationship between the West and the East.

2.7 Said’s *Orientalism*, identity and acts of “othering”

Simply put, Orientalism is the scholarly knowledge of the West about the East. This knowledge has been used to legitimize imperialism and has consequently contributed to its expansion. Thus, the global differences were partly created through this field. Edward Said became highly influential in postcolonial studies after his publication of *Orientalism* in 1978. Examining the Western approach to the Orient, Said shows how academics have “manufactured” a version of the East that is implicitly racist. The countries of the Middle East and Asia, have been labelled the Orient. The creation of the Orient as we know it has been done through the power of literature and language. This “reality” has been reasserted through a Western tradition of narratives about the East. The Orient has been depicted as distant, exotic, sensual, illiterate, dangerous and mysterious in literature and film. The West, on the

other hand, has asserted its role as rational, literate, civilized, tangible and controlled. The Orient is oversimplified and full of stereotypes. Despite the passage of time they have not changed substantially. We have a fixed mind-set of what it means to be Oriental. As if carved in stone, mystery and muddle have come to represent the East. In fact, Said states that “the rule in its historical development as an academic discipline has been its increasing scope, not its greater selectiveness” (Said, *Orientalism* 163). Thus, despite our increased knowledge these ideas have not been altered to any great extent or been renewed. This is regardless of the fact that the Orient stretches over numerous cultures and vast distances. Geographically, the Orient is diverse. But imaginative geography is quite the contrary. The Orient is our fixed idea of what is “out there”, beyond one’s own territory (Said, *Orientalism* 168). These misconceptions and stereotypes have been strengthened by representations of the Orient in literature and other art forms. Said argues that “such texts can *create* not only knowledge but also the very reality they appear to describe” (Said, *Crisis* 369). The result is a mind-set in which the West has viewed themselves as superior to other peoples in other continents. This distinction has happened through acts of “othering”, i.e. defining oneself by stating what they are not.

National identity is built upon the notion that you are different from others. What makes us different derives from how we define others and ourselves. “Othering” groups of people creates unity and solidarity within the group of those who consider themselves as different from the external. A common commitment strengthens that community as they differentiate themselves from others external to the community. As the West sets itself apart from the East, a boundary is placed, and this boundary has proved unremovable. The imaginative geography, including the distinction between “our land /barbarian land”, is a Western construction (Said, *Orientalism* 167):

It is enough for “us” to set up these boundaries in our own minds; “they” become “they” accordingly, and both their territory and their mentality is designated as different from “ours”. To a certain extent modern and primitive societies seem thus to derive from a sense of their identities negatively. (Said, *Orientalism* 167)

This creates a gap between Western nations and the others. In the colonial era the roles of oppressor and oppressed were cast, and the dominant powers believed themselves to be superior to others and more civilized. As a line is drawn between the East and the West, “Europe is powerful and articulate; Asia is defeated and distant” (Said, *Orientalism* 170); Europe has the self-given power to manufacture the Orient. In *Waiting for the Barbarians* the

acts of “othering” are portrayed through an ethnocentric attitude and torture of those who are perceived to be different. Continuing to see a group of people as the “other” reinforces one’s own identity. A part of being a successful frontier settlement rests on its ability to keep themselves enclosed and together, while keeping enemies out. As indicated already, an example of this from the novel is portrayed during the first encounter between Colonel Joll and the Magistrate. Applying the term “barbarian” is a derogatory way of deeming someone inferior to oneself. According to the Oxford Dictionary, the definition for the noun barbarian is “a member of a people not belonging to one of the great civilizations” (Oxford Dictionary). In addition, synonyms to the adjective are brutish and uncultured. Such an offensive description substantiates the notion between them and us.

I have examined and commented on literary examples from the first encounter between Joll and the Magistrate, as well as the relationships between the Empire and the barbarians, and the Magistrate and the barbarian woman in some detail. I have also given an overview on Coetzee’s narrative strategies, the moral issue of representing torture, and Said’s critique of Oriental scholarship as relevant extra textual information to the examples in order to show how torture is represented. The subsequent section will recapitulate the context, purpose and effect of torture. By briefly pointing to my examination, I wish to affirm and emphasize my findings.

2.8 The oppressors and the oppressed

The relationships between the novel’s characters depict the different power dynamics at play. They are also inextricably intertwined, classic and complex. The Empire and the territory in the novel are unknown. In this way, we cannot pinpoint the narrative to Coetzee’s home country the way we can with *Disgrace*. In the narrative, torture occurs and escalates in the same context. The fear of the barbarians was initiated through the Empire’s campaign spiralling from paranoia and unspecified fear. This is the starting point from which torture develops. As indicated, identity is built upon the notion that you are different from others. What makes us different is derives from how we define others and ourselves. Said’s theoretical examination concerning the distinction between “our land/their land” (Said, *Orientalism* 167) has proven to be significant, a distinction which is exemplified in the novel. In this way, the novel function as an illustration of what Said criticises. Consequently, Coetzee and Said’s work substantiates each other in a way. This is despite the fact that Said

and Coetzee operate in different ways and in different genres. The fear of the “other” is illustrated in the novel when the Magistrate articulates their relationship to the barbarians:

In private I observed that once in every generation, without fail, there is an episode of hysteria about the barbarians. There is no woman living along the frontier who has not dreamed of a dark barbarian hand coming under her bed to grip her ankle, no man who has not frightened himself with visions of the barbarians carousing in his home, breaking plates, setting fire to the curtains, raping his daughters. These dreams are the consequences of too much ease. Show me a barbarian army and I will believe. (WB 9)

In *Waiting for the Barbarians*, we can observe a wave of xenophobia. Before the Empire’s campaign against the barbarian threat, there had been no fear of the nomadic people or fisher folk. The barbarian threat was constructed through ethnocentric attitudes and suspicion. In this manner, the novel is fictional illustration of imperial injustice. It is through their fear of a barbaric attack that the power dynamics develop. As indicated already, this is manifested in the characters’ relation to each other. The “other”, the savage barbarian lurking outside their gates, is a construct. That “other” is one who the Empire set themselves apart from, through language and actions. This is evident in the novel, expressed both through rhetoric and torture. It is also the distinction which fear originates from, which again causes violence. Even the torture of the Magistrate originates from fear, but is more a part of the imperial avalanche of colonization. Power dynamics corresponds with the instances of violence, and the hierarchical structures are deeply affected by the Empire as the ultimate authority.

Although the purposes of torture are diverse, the instances of such violence in the novel are connected by the same cause. We should consider the violence in general, as a case that could occur within any nation. As far as the characters in *Waiting for the Barbarians* are concerned, the torturers are the same while the victims change. As mentioned, a common denominator of torture in the novel is that it is used as a means of interrogation executed by the Empire’s Third Bureau. Initially, torture is a means to acquire information. The purpose of torturing the nomadic people is therefore to find any information about a possible barbarian attack. This is conveyed through several cases of torture of the nomadic people.

Accused of fraternizing with the enemy and opposing the practises of the Empire, the Magistrate becomes a victim of torture as well. He is tortured in different ways than the nomadic people. However, I believe the purpose of torture has changed slightly as well. At first, similar to the torture of the nomads, Joll and Mandel try to get information about the barbarians. As the Empire tortures one of their own, the Magistrate (who does not buckle under pressure), the purpose of torture shifts from being an interrogation technique to public

humiliation. Examples of this is when the Magistrate is chased around the court yard in women's clothing, made to perform tricks and hung from the Mulberry tree. I believe it is his punishment for refusing to give them information, and working against the Empire. Torture here becomes a statement. This public display of torture is intended to humiliate, sending a signal to the rest of the people in the frontier town. It is a declaration on how enemies of the state will be treated, and those in power show no mercy. Torture is applicable to people, that is those in power, even one's own, as long as the cause legitimizes the act. The Empire's strategy is that the truth shall be revealed by any means necessary.

After viewing the context and purposes of torture in *Waiting for the Barbarians*, I will proceed by affirming the effects of torture on the different characters. Torture is, and has been, used as a means of interrogation to extract information, as punishment, coercion, or in order to spread fear to avoid opposition or resistance. In the latter case, public displays of violence and torture have proven to be efficient methods. Most of the torture in the novel is a public spectacle. This is exemplified when the nomads are tortured publicly, and the Magistrate is tortured under the Mulberry tree. Representatives of the unnamed Empire portray ethnocentric attitudes when they draw a line between themselves and the barbarians. The various characters share both similarities and differences relating to the effect torture have on them. Regarding the Empire's treatment of those inferior, one aspect distinguishes the victims of torture. The nomadic people are perceived as the "other" from the beginning and are identified as barbarians right away. This is due to ethnic affiliation and their way of life which is different from those in the Empire. The Magistrate, on the other hand, is transformed by the torture, as isolation and "othering" turns him "into a beast" (WB 87). The nomadic people and the Magistrate are both tortured and "othered". But while the Magistrate is made different, the nomadic people has not changed. However, as he is both an oppressor and an oppressed, the Magistrate is balancing between his old status and that of the barbarians. This is because he is reduced to something less than the people of the Empire, but he is still "better" than the barbarians. Actions against a person are internalized and consequently rubs off in relation to others.

To sum up, firstly, the nomadic people are subjected and alienated through torture. It is a manifestation of the fact that they are different; the nomadic people are accused and punished for being barbarians. Torture rests heavily on the Magistrate's conscience. Unwilling to become a part of the immorality of torture, he tries to act according to his sense

of right and wrong. Second, and consequently, the Magistrate is subjected and alienated through torture. The nomadic people and the Magistrate are “othered” by torture. He notes himself that he has been turned into a beast during isolation, and humiliated in public as a raging old man. In this manner, torture has destroyed him as human being. Prior to torture, he cannot see that he was a part of the Empire’s practises. And prior to this epiphany, he acted on his internalized imperialist attitude. This rubbed off onto his relationship with the barbarian woman. When the barbarian woman tries to explain why she should not be wanted after she has been tortured, she “holds up her forefinger, grips it, twists it” (*WB* 29) possibly gesturing that she is broken or used. In this way, she has internalized oppression. Thus, the Magistrate’s internalization of colonial attitudes affects his relationship to the barbarian woman. Despite his initial belief that he is trying to do well, he is another extension of the Empire. He realises this after internal debates with his conscience.

Based on the findings of this chapter, it is evident that torture leads to othering if you are made a victim of torture, something has been done to you that makes you different from the rest, both from the oppressor and one’s own social group. It will also become a part of you and follow you in your relationship with others. Oppression causes “alienation, depression, shame, and anger” (Oliver XXI). The nomadic people and the Magistrate are exposed to colonial subjugation, which is a force to be reckoned with. The Magistrate’s connection with the Empire rubs off on his relationship with the barbarian woman. The result of torture is social exclusion. Inhuman treatment and breaches of human rights are depicted through torture, not only against the nomadic people, but also against one of their own. In this novel, torture and gender dictates and illustrates power structures. It also sets people apart according to race, rank and gender. It becomes obvious that the effects of torture are immense, and that violence becomes internalized to some extent.

3 Depictions of rape in *Disgrace*

3.1 Sexual violence

Sexual violence is a prominent theme in *Disgrace*. Through his depictions of gender-based violence, Coetzee highlights South African attitudes towards rape, exploring how people tend to scale the severity of the crime's circumstances. Dubious and even unacceptable attitudes are evident in reference to the causes and consequences of rape, which I will return to later. Initially, I will present Coetzee's narrative strategies and their effect. The subsequent section will be an overview of the South African context. I see this as necessary in order to explain the normalcy around the phenomenon of gender-based violence in South Africa and place the novel in context. My reason for doing so is that I believe it is important to consider how the literary text is simultaneously anchored in and prompted by the historical reality of South Africa. This extra textual information will form a basis for my examination of violence in *Disgrace*. There are three specific cases of violence experienced by the characters in the novel: the forced relationship Melanie Isaacs has with David Lurie, the beating and ignition of David Lurie when he is attacked by his daughter's rapists, and the gang rape of Lucy Lurie. The two incidents of sexual violence I wish to examine are the so-called affair between Melanie Isaacs and David Lurie, and the gang rape of Lucy Lurie. These offenses should be examined in relation to one another, as they are inextricably connected. It is through this connection that Coetzee visualizes gendered power dynamics. Structurally, I will have to separate the two cases of rape from each other, and bring them together again after the examination as they share similarities and differences.

Sexual violence is a felony by law, either way you put it. Nevertheless, the instances of rape in the novel are presented as two events of different scale. The so-called affair between Professor David Lurie and the student Melanie Isaacs is an affair across age and ethnicities, i.e. between an older white South African man and a young coloured South African woman. The response to the two cases of rape occurs in the rural black South Africa and in the white liberal context of the University (Mardorossian 72). In the surroundings of the University, Lurie's male colleagues diminish the student-teacher affair as they show him support in the unfortunate mess he has gotten himself into. We are suddenly aware of the fact that this is not something that is new to them and that earlier and similar cases have been hushed up. In this

manner, the support from the male colleagues that Lurie receives in the hearing shows a lack of respect for the situation while they at the same time devalue the severity of the crime committed. This first scenario is given little attention and importance in the novel, but the way it is communicated narratively is noteworthy. This is also significant for the rape of Lucy, even though its consequences are given a greater amount of textual space. The importance of the two events of sexual violence is determined by their consequences for the characters and the development of the plot (Lothe 75). This is achieved through David Lurie as the focalizer. Thus, the presentation, made by Lurie, indicates the importance of the event. Paying attention to narrative strategies will add further understanding to the novel and the process behind it.

The narration in the novel's discourse is important in several ways. Narration is significant to what the author is trying to illustrate, and relies on how the text is written and communicated (Lothe 6). In his narration, Coetzee applies different narrative devices. Writing the novel in present tense, Coetzee uses a third-person narrator. This narrator is Coetzee's main narrative instrument. In some way, the narrator seems to be omniscient, but then we realise that he knows more about David Lurie's thoughts than about some of the other characters. These narrative choices are effective. When it comes to narrative communication in *Disgrace*, David Lurie's role as the focalizer is one of importance. This is evident concerning both rapes, as information and reflections are filtered through him. When rape is used strategically in a novel, it is crucial to look at who is reporting the rape (Koopman 1). This is in order to understand the protagonist's association to the story, and what the author is trying to convey through that connection. Even though Coetzee is the historical author of the novel, he is transforming the character David Lurie into a tool by making him "the addresser" who "sends a message to the addressee" (Lodge and Wood 144, Lothe 15). David Lurie is a narrative construction that enables us to view the features and attitudes of many men. The narrative communication model, as defined by Roman Jakobson in his seminal article from 1960, illustrates how Lurie's perspective and reflections are the dominant forces of information provided to the reader. In certain passages, the reader may be uncertain whether it is the voice of the author or the narrator we are reading. Either way, much of the analytical work behind the written word depends on the reader's rethinking of various assumptions.

Importantly, the present tense locates situations in time. The third-person narration blends into free indirect discourse. Written in present tense and third-person limited, the

novel's style is both alive and communicative. The present tense's principal function is that it expresses the actions or states at the time of speaking. The effect of present tense is that the discourse becomes more immediate and alive while drawing the reader into the narrative. Third-person narration allows the character to stay outside of the plot, "even though he is also in the text" (Lothe 21). Lurie is both the narrator of, and the character within, his own story. But he does not know what the other characters feel or think. As other characters are only presented externally, the third-person narration in *Disgrace* is linked to, but not identical with, to David Lurie's perspective. Being an academic, Lurie's perspective and position are coloured by his background in literature and language. This is evident in his love for Romantic literature, and proficiency in languages. Inserting literary references to Byron and Wordsworth, he also includes phrases in Latin, German, French, Italian and Afrikaans, many of which are seen as the languages of the learned. His academic background colour and intensify the character of Lurie and his attitude towards young, coloured women. Already, the reader can detect an attitude in Lurie of seeing others as inferior. The affair between Melanie and Lurie is not given the same attention as the crime committed against Lucy, much due to the fact that it is out of Lurie's control. He is no longer the active agent; together with his daughter he has become a victim. Again, depictions of both rapes portray David Lurie's personal evaluation of the different situations. the reader cannot take his perspective for granted. In his relationships with Soroya and Melanie, he displays a total lack of empathy. Prior to the rape of his daughter, he fails to understand any other perspective than his own. The tables turn as he and his daughter are attacked, and Lurie suddenly feels the crime on his own body. He becomes engulfed by the repercussions of the attack. Just like the blow on the back of his head, the rape hits him hard.

Violence in *Disgrace* is presented in very different ways, illustrating various types of rape. The different rapes stem from various reasons and have dissimilar purposes. Still the effect is of similar outcome. The gang rape of Lucy is a physically aggressive form of gender-based violence, where impulse, anger and lust become major parts of the deed. This physical aggression is not present in the same way in the professor-student affair, as further examination will illustrate. Lurie is driven by lust and impulse, but he does not feel any anger towards Melanie. He seems rather bewitched by the arousal. Lucy is also portrayed as much more affected and shaken by the rape, a crime fuelled by exercising power over someone. David Lurie does not understand the burden he lays on Melanie or the effect it has on her.

Consequently, it is more or less omitted. Nonetheless, domination and submission are massive parts of both events.

In order to place the novel within its time and place, we should consider the aspects of violence within the South African context. It is of significance to link fiction and reality because *Disgrace* is essentially anchored in a historical reality. There is certainly a difference between reality and fiction, as the latter is a narrative which deals with imaginary and invented characters and events. Thus, fiction consists of a variety of narrative constructions. Nonetheless, the novel is linked to South Africa and Cape Town as it points to and indirectly reflects a major social problem. The novel portrays the unpleasantness associated with apartheid in South Africa. The underlying attitudes concerning gender violence can be seen in connection to colonial powers and apartheid. Thus the attitudes of segregation can be linked to the attitudes we see against women today. The following paragraphs will evolve around rape as a gendered problem in South Africa. This will provide an understanding of Coetzee's historical context when writing *Disgrace*.

3.2 The South African context

Violence against women takes many forms. In order to systematically categorize violence, we can divide the term roughly into subsections such as physical, psychological, economic, and sexual. However, one form does not automatically exclude the other. Violence occurs in several arenas, both in the public and domestic spheres. As indicated already, rape is an entrenched problem in South Africa. The reliability of crime statistics is called into question due to unreported crime. Because of unreported and undiscovered crime, statistics and police records of sexual violence against women are inaccurate. Nonetheless, they give an indication of the comprehensive problem.

In relation to its population size, South Africa has the highest rate of police reported rape in the world. The nation is ranked above any other country in the world, even those at war or in conflict. Dubious and even unacceptable attitudes are evident in reference to the causes and consequences of rape in this nation. This is a great concern to South Africans and non-governmental organizations worldwide. In fact, the United Nations express their concern on pandemic violence against women in South Africa. In a report with concluding observations from 2011 made by the UN Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination

against Women, a concern is expressed at “the inordinately high prevalence of sexual violence against women and girls”, as well as “widespread domestic violence” (“Concluding Observations”). A great worry of theirs, a statement which also pinpoints the problem with rape at its roots, is that these conditions “appear to be socially normalized, legitimized and accompanied by a culture of silence and impunity” (“Concluding Observations”). In reality, there are low levels of prosecution and conviction, something which adds to the explanation why certain social and cultural measures have proven to be inadequate. Male-oriented awareness campaigns replaced a long tradition of targeting the unfortunate persons. The general response concerning preventive actions to target sexual violence was directed towards victims. They focused on how victims, or potential victims, could avoid being victimized. Accordingly, women ought to consider how they dressed and acted in public, while at the same time avoiding certain places at certain hours of the day. Sadly, this suggested that the question of guilt lay with the victims, i.e. they could have prevented rape if they had taken precautions (Moffett 134-135). Short-term solutions replaced wide scoped preventive ads. Thus, instead of addressing male attitudes to rape, women’s behaviour was apparently to blame. This fact substantiates the UN committee’s concern that rape has been a socially normalized reality for women in South Africa, and that the problem has not been adequately approached. With male-oriented awareness campaigns, many men felt they were being accused and slandered as potential rapists. Thus, either way people were offended and South Africa regressed to the beginning in awareness raising campaigns. When attempting to transform a society on such a tensed and deeply rooted social problem, we will have to tread warily. Achieving lasting results is difficult in South Africa, a country in which men are deemed superior to women, both in public and private realms.

South Africa is a highly patriarchal nation. Although there has been an effort to improve women’s rights on paper, they do not exist in practice. The reality of gender-based violence is that democracy ends at the threshold of private households (Moffett 143). The reasons for rape are diverse. Victims of rape are also varied. Keeping low levels of unreported and undiscovered crime in mind, committing a gender-based crime will most likely not have severe consequences. Statistics on sexual violence indicate that rape has become a way of life in South Africa, when the fact is that approximately 175 South African women are raped per day (“South Africa must do more”). This sums up the total of nearly 64 000 rapes on a yearly basis, which was documented in 2012 (“South Africa must do more”). One year prior to the publication of *Disgrace*, the total number of rape or attempted rape reported to the South

African Police services was 49 280 (Hirschowitz et al. 22). While we move further away from apartheid, the numbers of rape appear to have increased. It has been argued that rape also functions as social control in post-apartheid South Africa (Moffett 138), where women are being put back in their places. I will return to this after my examination of Lucy's rape.

With a turbulent history, South Africa has been the scene of much unrest and violence. This has repeatedly been portrayed through literature and music, especially during the time of racial segregation. It has also been a paradigm proven to be difficult to surpass after its demise in 1994, with so much latent in memory. Throughout the duration of apartheid, several countries and cultural workers boycotted South Africa in the 1980s to show their stand against the regime. As J. M. Coetzee established himself as an author during this period of time, several of his novels were influenced by current affairs. In the post-apartheid South African context, much of the discussion about rape has evolved around race and class, and not gender. In this way, a tradition of linking sexual violence to the regime of ethnic segregation is visible. This partly explains why sexual violence has been a difficult topic to address. Accusations of race and class have served as old ghosts from apartheid. Apartheid has been presented as an excuse for the current situation, but that would be avoiding the subject matter. The institutionalized regime should not be left out of the equation; however, it has enraged women to see demasculinization as an explanation, and a justification, for rape (Moffett 136-137). Women underwent the same turmoil yet resisted the need to rape others in order to resurrect their femininity. Presenting rape in South Africa as a racial issue is underestimating the actual problem by sticking your head in the sand; in this manner, it is an act of cowardly refusing to face disagreeable situations. It is simply unfair, as the problem is more complex. Race, class and gender are interweaved. Complex problems do not usually stem from one single apparent reason.

Having examined and portrayed the link between fiction and reality, I would like to proceed by focusing on the novel and in particular the passages on rape. As the novel is anchored in the historical reality of post-apartheid South Africa, the narrative refers to and indirectly reflects South Africa and the major social problems of the Cape Town region in particular - although the problems of this region are also typical of those of the nation as a whole. The subsequent sections will therefore examine violence in *Disgrace* more specifically.

3.3 *Disgrace*

Disgrace is a novel of narrative complexity, as is most of Coetzee's work. Major themes such as sex, family, race, masculinity, and femininity are inextricably intertwined in this novel, which earned the author his second Booker Prize. The novel evolves mostly around how the characters cope with living in a country where the balance of power is shifting. Without institutionalized racial segregation, white South Africans continued to constitute the minority, but found themselves stripped of legalised power or any other form of leverage. When it comes to violence in *Disgrace*, we should differentiate between the historical dimension and the gender-based problems of South African society. Coetzee focuses on different aspects of gender-based crime and its consequences on people's lives and relationships. He does so while linking the novel to a nation with heavy historical baggage. The first sexual offense, in which David Lurie is the initiator, is very much coloured by Lurie's perspective and by his role as an aggressor. With the second offense, the roles have changed. Lurie is no longer the perpetrator, but is made a victim. He knows nothing of the rape of his daughter as he was locked up in the bathroom at the time of the event. In this manner, imagination becomes a strong agent. Since the atrocities of rape are not spelled out, Coetzee "has given serious consideration to strategies of representing sexual violence" (Graham 441). With the reader's imagination as a creative tool in the process, descriptions of the actual rape are not necessary. This is because the reader partakes, along with the author, in the process of creating the narrative as he or she is reading. The reader also performs an individual interpretation of the narrative. In addition, I believe Coetzee's strategy reflects how rape has become a silent crime, i.e. a crime one does not speak of. Sexual violence is a criminal action, of an intimate and private character. As she is being forced to non-consensual sex, the victim's personal boundaries have been disregarded and erased. Questions of guilt might arise, on the victim's behalf, in the aftermath. Often victims of sexual violence blame themselves. Sexual violence is loaded with taboos that very few dare to address. The result is that Coetzee raises awareness around different cases of an otherwise unspeakable crime, and the surrounding attitudes.

Coetzee does not add to the general misconception that rape in South Africa is a matter of black peril and white victimization. In the aftermath of apartheid, a tradition of apartheid narratives internalized the threat of a black rapist (Moffett 135). These racial prejudices were social constructions that resulted in the fear of post apartheid black

retaliation, and the notion that no women were safe. At first glance, readers may find that *Disgrace* is another contribution to this tradition, with the stereotype character of Lucy's rape. This was the interpretation of the ANC and it gave reason for them to condemn the novel after its publication in 1999. Indeed, South Africa has a history of high prevalence of rape, but the author does not fuel the fire of a touchy subject with racist stereotypes. The novel questions these conventional conceptions and our weighing of sexual violence. In order to place *Disgrace* in its South African context, statistics can provide with some basic knowledge on the subject.

In a 2011-conducted survey on victims of crime, the motives behind assaults were statistically accounted for. In relation to the total, the percentage of racial, ethnic or political motivation was believed to constitute a meagre 0,7 per cent (Statistics South Africa – Victims of Crime Survey 2011). It should be kept in mind that these statistics were gathered 12 years after the publication of *Disgrace*. Yet it can be argued that there have not been large fluctuations during this period of time. The majority belief concerning motivation behind an assault is that the crime was triggered by jealousy, money or other financial motive, and personal anger. These reasons constitute 67,5 per cent of the total behind assaults (Statistics South Africa – Victims of Crime Survey 2011). Adequate statistics on the motivation behind sexual offenses are difficult to come across. Unless the rapist is interrogated or interviewed, the motivation behind the rape cannot be ascertained. This is difficult with low conviction rates. Thus it is often the victim's retelling of the experience we are made familiar with. On this note, a question to keep in mind is whether the truth, or experience, behind the sexual violence is factual or factual. These may not concur. When it comes to the motivation in this rape case factual memory is omitted, as there are neither witnesses nor rapists to question. Hostility can be traced at the very end of the novel, as there continues to be a quarrel between Lurie and the youngest rapist. After being caught peeping at Lucy through the bathroom window, Lurie hits Pollux, one of the attackers. He also sends the dog to attack Pollux, and strikes him while shouting "You swine!", "You filthy swine!" (*D* 206). Pollux's instant response when he is eventually free from the dog is to shout back "We will kill you all!" (*D* 207). This corresponds with what Lucy later tells her father concerning their motivation to rape her. I will return to this later in my examination.

The factual memory of the gang rape is the only communicated version of Lucy's rape in *Disgrace*. It cannot be verified by others, but is perceived as real by the victim

(Landesman and Bendor 4). What we do know is that when it comes to sexual offences, the victim often already knows the perpetrator, or the perpetrator is an unknown community member (Statistics South Africa – Victims of Crime Survey 2011). Both offenses in *Disgrace* can be directly linked to this consensus. The circumstances around rape in *Disgrace* are of different contexts. Despite depicting two “versions” of gender-based violence, the general criticism, as indicated already, in post-apartheid South Africa concentrated itself around the black on white violence. Peeking beneath the surface of the novel, this is simply not the case. The differences within the category of sexual violence against women are many. Approximately 96 per cent of rape perpetrators use physical force (Statistics South Africa – Victims of Crime Survey 2011). What is visible in *Disgrace* is that the grade of physical force, prior to and during the act, varies greatly. As opposed to Melanie Isaacs, Lucy Lurie is physically and sexually abused in an aggressive manner. We can say that Melanie is exposed to aggressive behaviour as well, but she does not suffer from any physical battering. Her non-consensual intercourse with David Lurie is more a psychological overpowering than physical violence. This, however, does not make Melanie’s case less severe than Lucy’s.

3.4 “Not rape, not quite that”

The first sentence in *Disgrace* is a precise placing of the protagonist David Lurie’s features and attitude. The description, “for a man of his age, fifty-two, divorced, he has, to his mind, solved the problem of sex rather well” (*D* 1), is linked to, and at the same time distanced from, Lurie. In this third-person narration, the very first description of Lurie is given by the omniscient narrator, which can offer a bird’s-eye view about the story. In this case, the omniscient narrator proposes a judgement on the character of David Lurie and his behaviour. It is not the voice of the author, but is a narrative instrument that conveys knowledge about the character’s unspoken thoughts. Stating this, the omniscient narrator simultaneously criticises this belief or opinion. The first sentence is a synopsis of the protagonist, i.e. his very presence and comprehensions are condensed into few words. There was a “problem” with sex, but it has apparently been “solved” (*D* 1). It is thus an introductory note with several functions. First of all, it reveals how the protagonist views himself. Furthermore, it criticises the protagonist’s attitude by signalling the narrator’s attitudinal distance from Lurie. Lastly, it subtly predicts that this view will be proven wrong. David Lurie is a middle-aged professor with few friends and little contact with his family. When it comes to the opposite sex, he has a

preference for younger women. However, he is getting on. In order to acquire sex, Lurie pays for female company. With a history of being quite a womanizer, ageing has failed to maintain his advantage of good looks:

With his height, his good bones, his olive skin, his flowing hair, he could always count on a degree of magnetism. If he looked at a woman in a certain way, with a certain intent, she would return his look, he could rely on that. That was how he lived; for years, for decades, that was the backbone of his life. Then one day it all ended. Without warning his powers fled. (*D* 7)

Growing older, this affirmation had to be found elsewhere. As his magnetic powers were no longer irresistible, “overnight he became a ghost. If he wanted a woman he had to learn to pursue her; often, in one way or another, to buy her” (*D* 7). This indicates his relationships to Soroya and Melanie, how he finds himself in need of new arrangements. In *Waiting for the Barbarians*, the protagonist notes that what old men seek is to recover their youth in the arms of young women (*WB* 141). This, I believe, is the case with David Lurie as well.

In order to examine violence in *Disgrace*, we need to carefully explore Lurie’s relationship with women. The first example worth examining is his relationship with Soroya. Lurie’s weekly appointment, the young prostitute Soroya, is introduced to the reader at the very beginning of the novel. Their relationship is stated early on, and his description of her is noteworthy:

He strokes her honey-brown body, unmarked by the sun; he stretches her out, kisses her breasts; they make love. Soroya is tall and slim, with long black hair and dark liquid eyes. Technically he is old enough to be her father; but then, technically, one can be a father at twelve. (*D* 1)

This account offers a description of the kind of women David Lurie prefers. She is a coloured young woman, young enough to be his daughter. After remarking this, he immediately checks himself by explaining the age difference and how it does not matter. We note the formation of a pattern from now on. And in bed, he remarks, she is “not effusive. Her temperament is in fact rather quiet, quiet and docile” (*D* 1). From the omniscient narrator’s first sentence to this description, there has been a significant modulation of perspective. This is Lurie’s own justification for the age difference. In debates with himself, justifications accompany almost every single action of his throughout the novel. Soroya reveals nothing from her life outside Windsor Mansions, the flat where they meet. When she has to take a break from Discrete Escorts and help her ill mother, Lurie tries to find a replacement but none will do:

There is still Soroya. He ought to close that chapter. Instead, he pays a detective agency to track her down. Within days he has her real name, her address, her telephone number. He telephones at nine in the morning, when the husband and the children will be out. Soroya?" he says. (*D* 9)

He knows that he "ought to give up, retire from the game" (*D* 9). However, he does the opposite. He telephones Soroya who accuses him of harassment, and demands him to never contact her again (*D* 10). When Lurie has ethically moved from one point to another, it is easier to cross the line again. This also opens up for further repetition. Suddenly, however, looking back he has moved quite far away from the first misdeed and his personal boundary has been stretched rather far. I believe he sees the end of the arrangement with Soroya as rejection, making him more desperate. Tracking down Soroya outside of her work is Lurie's first violation, which consequently leads to others with Melanie.

It is important to note this characteristic feature of his relationship to his student Melanie because the two women are similar to a certain degree. In *Disgrace* Lurie serves as a symbol for white South African men, and discrimination against women. This is why we should devote particular attention to his character when examining sexual violence in the novel. In regards of his development from a sex client to a sex offender, Soroya becomes a prelude to the rape of Melanie. Next to the introductory note on David Lurie made by the omniscient narrator in the very first chapter, his choice of women offers an additional evaluation of Lurie. At their first meeting, Soroya wore makeup, which Lurie asked her to wipe off. He recalls that she "obeyed, and has never worn it since", stating that she is a "ready learner, compliant, pliant" (*D* 5). Lurie's attitude illustrates that he preferred the arrangement in which she was submissive to him. As he paid for a service she offered, he is the one who holds the power in his grasp. And as a client, he could dictate the setting after his preferences. A similar power dynamic is evident in his next relationship with Melanie Isaacs.

When Lurie first notices Melanie after work one Friday afternoon, Lurie describes her as "not the best student but not the worst either: clever enough, but unengaged" (*D* 11). Such a description instantly underestimates Melanie. As her professor, Lurie knows about her academic achievements. On the other hand, the description is made by someone who thinks himself superior to her and devalues her. Catching up with her, Lurie notes that she smiles back, a smile that is "sly rather than shy" (*D* 11). It is important to keep in mind that this is Lurie's interpretation, a rather subjective interpretation influenced by his attitudes and need of female company. Physically, he notes that:

She is small and thin, with close-cropped black hair, wide, almost Chinese cheekbones, large, dark eyes. Her outfits are always striking. Today she wears a maroon miniskirt with a mustard-coloured sweater and black tights; the gold baubles on her belt match the gold balls of her earrings. (*D* 11)

David Lurie is “mildly smitten with her” and her beauty, and invites her to his place for a drink (*D* 11). Their first encounter outside of the classroom is the first of several meetings to come. From the descriptions of Soroya and Melanie we can draw the conclusion that he prefers younger, coloured women. A further connection is that they are both viewed as submissive to him, either by profession or due to ethnic affiliation. They are also subordinate to him in a plain physical sense, either in body size or how they are positioned during sexual intercourse. An example of the latter is when Lurie has been drowsing after sex with Melanie and “the girl is lying beneath him” (*D* 19). It is safe to say that his choice of women is turning into a pattern. After divorcing, being on Soroya’s list of clients, and “an anxious flurry of promiscuity” with random women (*D* 7), he crosses the line with his second forbidden affair. This is where a negative development emerges. Sexual violence is usually not socially acceptable; nonetheless, it has become so in South Africa to a certain degree. The following paragraph will focus on how David Lurie crosses the line and eventually rapes a student.

Even though he uses no force with her, Lurie crosses the line when Soroya is suddenly unable to meet him. When Soroya will not recognize him outside of work, and accuses him of harassment, he moves on to the next romantic jaunt. Lurie dubiously contacts a student of his on the way home from work one Friday evening. After exchanging a few introductory greetings, he immediately invites Melanie to his house for drinks. She reluctantly agrees. After dinner and drinks, she intends to leave but he urges her to stay. Drenched in his fascination for Romantic poetry, he urges her to spend the night, as “beauty does not belong to her alone” and “she has a duty to share it” (*D* 16). Though he is decorating his message, he describes women as possessions. At a later rendezvous, they “make love” (*D* 19) on the living-room floor. Lurie describes Melanie as passive in the heat of the moment, and when he awakes from drowsing after sex he finds himself lying on top of her. The third time they meet in private he forces himself upon her:

He has given her no warning; she is too surprised to resist the intruder who thrusts himself upon her. When he takes her in his arms, her limbs crumple like a marionette’s. Words heavy as clubs thud into the delicate whorl of her ear. “No, not now!” she says, struggling. “My cousin will be back!” But nothing will stop him. He carries her to the bedroom. (*D* 24)

Melanie tries to say no, but nothing will stop him and he feels astonished by the sensation she evokes in him (*D* 25). What this particular feeling actually is is not stated. However, it would not be a farfetched interpretation that he is feeling control, power or a distorted intensification of masculinity. She does not resist, all she does is to avert herself. While reflecting on what is going on, either during the act or with self-denying hindsight, Lurie comments:

Not rape, not quite that, but undesired nevertheless, undesired to the core. As though she had decided to go slack, die within herself for the duration, like a rabbit when the jaws of the fox close on its neck. So that everything done to her might be done, as it were, far away. (*D* 25)

The passage exemplifies how Lurie subconsciously knows he is doing something wrong. Yet he keeps persuading himself that it is not the case. From the first encounter to the example above, Lurie has crossed the line several times, morally and ethically. Despite reassurances that he will not let it go too far (*D* 19), this is exactly what he has done. The flirtatious first encounter has evolved into sexual intercourse without consent, and moved from a so-called affair to the use of force against someone's will. Despite the changes in Melanie as she becomes more secluded and depressed, Lurie is apparently suffering from moral amnesia or blindness as he continues to seek her up. This means that he fails to understand that his actions are morally wrong. Basically, he does no longer see right from wrong. Lurie is in a state in which he suppresses the effect of his own actions, where moral responsibility is disregarded. It is not until the relationship is known and consequences start to appear, that it is ended. Consequently, the initial suggestion that Lurie has "to his mind, solved the problem of sex rather well" (*D* 1) is founded on wobbly ground. Paying for female company and initiating an affair with a student of his are not good outcomes or solutions trying to solve the problem of sex. He did not force himself on Soroya, but he becomes controlling as he tries to enter her private life. As a fifty-two year old, twice-divorced man, Lurie has understood that he no longer has any magical power over women, thus he is forced to find new ways of acquiring sex. Despite ageing, he still lusts for women of a younger age. This makes him pursue women in a way he earlier would not have, making him more dominant than before. The result is that David Lurie places his rights of desire above women's rights (Mardorossian 79).

3.4.1 Moral neutralization and amnesia

During his affair with Melanie Isaacs, Lurie turns his actions into euphemisms. Instead of calling it what it is, he redecorates and renames his actions. Knowing what he is doing is neither morally nor ethically defensible, the reader detects a minor inner struggle in Lurie. Yet, he continues his actions almost infatuated by a gambling danger and romanticism. As regards every unethical act, Lurie has a reason and a justification covering reality, i.e. he morally neutralizes his deeds. Lurie's ways of justifying his relationships derives from an inner moral dissonance. This internal disagreement is evident throughout *Disgrace*. Lurie's affair with Melanie starts off as something ostensibly innocent, but when she hesitates and wants to end their affair he usurps upon her. He looks up her information, tries to call her, and visits her when he is not wanted. Thus, Lurie is repeating the pattern he made with Soroya though in a more aggressive manner. His first violation with Soroya is now multiplying with Melanie. Throughout the novel, Lurie conducts an internal on-going debate that he morally neutralizes. This is done through denial of responsibility and injury, techniques applied in different situations in life when justifications are sought (Kvalnes and Iyer 5). When Lurie morally neutralizes his violations they are a part of attempts to avoid the feeling of "any form of moral responsibility" (Kvalnes and Iyer 5). The nature of damage in Lurie and Melanie's so-called affair cannot, in his view, be compared to other types of violence. Neglecting the development of Melanie's psyche and her surroundings, Lurie continues. As he fails to show sympathy with others, he is most likely under the impression that that nobody gets hurt. The example given above of their third meeting ends with rape where she initially tried to resist. As he presses on, she gives in. During the rape, Melanie "die[s] within herself" "so that everything done to her might be done, as it were, far away" (*D* 25). With moral amnesia and a distorted view on masculinity, and right and wrong, Lurie disregards reality. Taking advantage of Melanie Isaacs, Lurie justifies his actions by claiming that a woman's body is not hers alone.

As the possessor of beauty, it is Melanie's duty to share it widely, according to Lurie. When the affair is publicly known, Lurie is put in front of a hearing. As a reason for the initiation of the affair and the pursuing of it, he firmly claims that he was possessed by lust, claiming to have been a "servant of Eros" (*D* 52). With references to Romanticism, his actions are deeply coloured by poetry and he fails to face reality. Here, Lurie obviously can be seen connection to the Byronic hero, a lonely and rebellious man, notorious for his love

affairs and unconventional life style. This is a link he would most likely see as a compliment. Lurie's love life is a romantic illusion as he fails to see the consequences of his affair with the young student. Again, the affair is not morally or ethically right, but he has convinced himself enough to pursue and act on it. As indicated already, this is due to the fact that he no longer has his good looks to depend on, and is thus forced to find other solutions. In the process he disregards any difference between right and wrong. Lurie is a narrative construction that enables us to view the attitudes and features of many men. He is therefore not alone.

At the University, the circumstances extenuate the crime. Prior to, during and after the committee hearing, Lurie tries to avoid the question of guilt in any possible manner. He intends to neither give a confession nor "be receptive to being counselled" (D 49). Lurie's colleagues hold the hearing in which both female and male members of the staff are present. As the female committee members feel that Davis is avoiding guilt, attempting to "simply go through the motions in the hope that the case will be buried under paper and forgotten" (D 51), they urge for a confession and reprimands. They appear to fear that there will be no consequences. The women are most keen on punishing him. Lurie's male colleagues try to help him, and urging him to think twice about what he is saying. One colleague states that the mess he has gotten himself into is understandable, as "we all have our weak moments, all of us, we are only human" (D 52). This gives the reader the impression that Lurie's case is not the first they have come across. Additionally, it actually suggests that one of them, or several, have been in the same situation. This can also be the reason why the women in the hearing are keener on giving him a penalty. Reassurances from his colleagues that this will work out fine, if he only shows some regret in public, are additional examples concerning moral neutralisation, amnesia, and blindness. This seems to be the mind-set most of the male professors suffer from. In this manner, the treatment of Lurie's relationship with Melanie is a betrayal of ethical responsibility (Graham 438). Non-existing humbleness and empathy reveal a lack of respect for the student and the situation; this attitude permeates the first rape in *Disgrace*. David Lurie eventually flees the scene and goes to visit his daughter, waiting for things to calm down. The following paragraph is an examination of the second rape in the novel. This is the pivotal event in the novel, an event that has major consequences for the discourse and for the thematics of violence explored through the discourse.

3.5 “I’m a dead person”

The second rape in *Disgrace* is one of a more physically aggressive character than the first. However, a description of the crime is absent. This is achieved by the use of paralipsis, a rhetoric device that creates a gap or an ellipsis in the discourse, thus suggesting that much of significance is absent. Thus, silence is narratively present. The effects are several. First, the actual rape is omitted through an explicit ellipsis. When the rape is omitted, “the text indicates how much of the story time it jumps over” (Lothe 59). By deliberately leaving out a description of the rape, the author invites the reader to fill in the narrative gaps (Lothe 59). This can be done because the meaning is understood without the text. Second, I would argue that the effect becomes even stronger since the reader’s imagination has to fill in the blanks. Silence around the rape suggests how horrible the crime is, how the reality is too grim to talk about. Furthermore, rape in general can be described as a silent violence concerning the aftermath of sexual violence. Rape is a silent crime, a crime people do not speak of, being such a private matter. Lucy Valerie Graham suggests that by reading about rape we are reading the unspeakable (Graham 1). In addition to leaving out descriptions of rape, the ethnicity of the rapist has changed from a white to black South Africans. Black perpetrators perform the multiple rapes, which distinguishes it from the previous case of sexual violence.

Descriptions of Lucy’s rape are omitted. When attacked by two young men and a boy on Lucy’s farm, Lurie is beaten and set on fire (*D* 96). “A hush falls” (*D* 96) during the time of the rape. Locked in the lavatory together with David Lurie, the reader knows nothing about what is going on with Lucy and the three young men. However, Lurie’s imagination, and our own for that matter, provide us with potent images and together we jump to the worst conclusion, while hoping for the best. Locked in the lavatory, Lurie fears what is happening on the other side of the door.

“Lucy!” he shouts. “Are you here?” A vision comes to him of Lucy struggling with the two in the blue overalls, struggling against them. He writhes, trying to blank it out. He hears his car start, and the crunch of tyres on gravel. Is it over? Are they, unbelievably, going? “Lucy!” he shouts, over and over, till he can hear the edge of craziness in his voice. At last, blessedly, the key turns in the lock. By the time he has the door open, Lucy has turned her back on him. (*D* 97)

If the actual rape itself is given little textual space in the novel, it is given so much space concerning its consequences. By omitting the actual rape through an ellipsis, Coetzee can focus on its aftermath. Thus, the ways in which David Lurie and Lucy deal with the rape afterwards

is of importance. After the attackers have left, with some of their belongings, Lucy opens the door to the lavatory. She has her back turned against him and “she is wearing a bathrobe, her feet are bare, her hair wet” (*D* 97). Ostensibly, she has tried to shower off the remains of what has been done to her. This is another link to the rape of Melanie. After her rape, Lurie “has no doubt, she, Melanie, is trying to cleanse herself of it, of him” (*D* 25). Despite Lurie’s attempts to provide solace, she immediately shuts herself down. She directs her focus on what has been done to her dogs and her father, while she tries to clean up the mess that has been made. What the three men did to her is not revealed until much later.

The silent aftermath of the rape is exemplified several times. Lucy’s, and now Lurie’s, friends will not utter the words rape. Ettinger and the Shaw’s tiptoe around the subject Lurie tries to rise at several occasions. They leave it up to Lucy to tell when the time is right, as it is her business, and hers alone (*D* 112). Until then they pretend as if nothing has happened. Despite the fact that the rape is not written in words, the crime can be read between the lines. After fighting each other for a long time, Lurie wanting his daughter to press charges on her rapists and Lucy refusing to do so, there is a breakthrough.

When examining how Coetzee illustrates gender-based violence with the second rape, we need to pay extra attention to the latter part of the novel. This is where Lucy expresses her experience of the gang rape, her factual truth. In the car, riding home to the farm, Lucy speaks of the pivotal event:

“It was so personal,” she says. “It was done with such personal hatred. That was what stunned me more than anything. The rest was ... expected. But why did they hate me so? I had never set eyes on them”. (*D* 156)

In return, her father offers an explanation for the cause of the rape pointing towards apartheid and the historical legacy of South Africa:

“It was history speaking through them,” he offers at last. “A history of wrong. Think of it that way, if it helps. It may have seemed personal, but it wasn’t. It came down from the ancestors”. (*D* 156)

When Lurie suggests that the rapists want Lucy as their slave, she corrects him by claiming it is not slavery. Lucy tries to express how it felt by saying it was “subjection. Subjugation” (*D* 156). To her, this could have been the rapist’s motivation for the attack. She experienced forced submission to control by others, with physical force. The young men made Lucy subservient. Indeed, the reader should question Lurie’s explanation of the rape, i.e. that it was solely a racially motivated act. Race-related discrimination could be a part of the motivation.

Nevertheless, the hatred Lucy felt is most likely also gender-related. As already indicated, most rapes are done to women with the same ethnic affiliation as the rapist. In Lucy's case, it is not so. This points to the rape being a racially motivated act. Race and gender are inextricably connected concerning the violators' motivation to rape. On sexual violence as social control in post-apartheid South Africa, Helen Moffett states that some men see themselves as "'forced' to rape women because the latter dare to practise freedom of movement, adopt a confident posture or gait, make eye contact" or "speak out for themselves" (138). If this is so, the rape of Lucy has more reasons than race retaliation and discrimination against women. If the rape of Lucy is a device used as a warning to keep her in her place, this is an extension of the gender aspect. This corresponds with Lucy's need to stay put and stick up for herself. Her response to the rapists and other men in the community is that she will not buckle under but rather make the best of the situation she is in, "this being South Africa" (*D* 112). Thus, Lucy will endure.

The immediate effects for Melanie and Lucy are submission, as they are taken over by their rapists. Much like the rape of Melanie, Lucy had to submit and it resulted in the feeling of dying during the forced intercourse. When oral communication no longer works between the father and his daughter, they send each other letters. In one of them Lucy states that she is "a dead person" and if she leaves now, she will be defeated and "taste that defeat for the rest of my life" (*D* 161). She intends to stay no matter what, thus showing that she cannot be broken or driven away. In her mind, Lucy will have to deal with South Africa. Despite the horrible crime done to her, she will make an attempt to live side by side with other South Africans with different race affiliations. When a neighbouring farmer by the name of Petrus vaguely hints at accepting Lucy as his third wife for the prize of her farm, this is a solution that Lucy might be willing to accept. Through this, Lucy will be able to stay while being out of reach of perpetrators. Petrus will be her protector in the exchange of land. Lucy already knows by this point that she has become pregnant with the rapist's child (*D* 197). Under the circumstances, this is Lucy's best response to the problem. It will integrate her in the community while showing she will not be broken and chased away. In this manner, she "accepts her fate as a symbol of the redistribution of power in post apartheid South Africa" (Mardorossian 74), and becomes a victim of history.

Helen Moffett finds that while the majority of rapists in South Africa are black, this is so "only because the majority of the South African population is black" (Moffett 135). When

black people make out 79,5 per cent of the total South African population, objections are difficult to make statistically. In general, rape occurs mostly between two or more people with same race or class affiliation. Whether or not Lucy's case of sexual violence is gender-based or race-based is a moot point, and one does not necessarily exclude the other. However, Lucy's experience of its nature is deeply racial indeed. It is her experience we need to base our examination of violence on because she was the only one who experienced and witnessed the rape. As we have no information from the rapists' perspective, her truth becomes the entire truth, whether it is a factual or factical version.

Through plot and repetition, the author illustrates the parallels between the two young women (Glenn 86). Even though their rapes are portrayed as different, they share similarities. In the following section I wish to sum up the findings based on my examination of depictions of violence in *Disgrace*. In order to do so, I intend to compare the two rapes concerning context, purpose, and effect.

3.6 Race and gender-based violence

The contexts of the rapes are different, despite the fact that both the rapes are situated in South Africa. Being a country of vast social differences, Coetzee has set the rapes in contrasting circumstances. While the rape of Melanie Isaacs occurs in the white liberal setting of the University, the gang rape of Lucy Lurie takes place in the countryside. The ethnicity of the different perpetrators conforms to the milieu in which the rapes are carried out, the first setting being predominately white. The rape in the countryside, on the other hand, is a setting in which a predominately black population resides. Thus, a white South African man, in a white liberal setting, carries out the first rape. Three black South Africans carry out the second rape, in a black environment. The events of sexual violence happen across races as the victims belong to a different ethnic affiliation than their rapists.

The two rapes in Coetzee's novel *Disgrace* differ in purpose. In this manner; Coetzee illustrates how reasons for rape are diverse. First, the way David Lurie acquires sex is an attempt at solving the problem of sex. Growing older, with his looks failing him, he has to find new ways. Initially, he believes he has solved "the problem of sex rather well" (*D* 1). As indicated already, the omniscient narrator criticises this notion. After Soroya rejects him, he initiates a relationship to a student. I believe this is partly because he is trying to hold on to

the person he used to be, a womanizer with magnetic powers. As Lurie and his old routines are out of date, he becomes a paying customer of female company. After some time, the prostitute Soroya is no longer a possible option. In the search for female company, and taking more extreme measures, Lurie initiates a relationship with a student of his. As Melanie also starts to have second thoughts, he forces him upon her and ends up raping her. However, as he has morally neutralized his actions, he fails to distinguish right from wrong. Pursuing younger women seem to be romantic acts of his; being under the impression that he is a “servant of Eros” (D 52). Spending most of his time reading and teaching about Wordsworth and the Byronic hero, Lurie fails to distinguish between the literature he teaches and reality. The rape of Melanie is a gendered crime, because Lurie’s actions portrays many men’s attitudes against women. I find no incentive in David Lurie’s rape of Melanie that point to the crime being racially motivated. He simply prefers the company of young coloured women.

Second, the rape of Lucy suggests other purposes for sexual violence. Due to the ellipsis of the rape, the purpose of sexual violence has to be understood from other aspects. As the actual rape is omitted in the discourse, and we know nothing of the perpetrators, Lucy’s factual memory of the rape is that their intention was to bring her under control. Lucy experiences the purpose of her rape to be “subjection. Subjugation” (D 159). Her description of the rape substantiates this notion, how it was “so personal” and “done with such personal hatred” (D 156). She believes the motivation for rape was for the rapists to collect a debt, thus Melanie “accepts her fate as a symbol of the redistribution of power in post apartheid South Africa” (Mardorossian 74). The rape happens across races. As the reader is only introduced to a subjective version, Lucy’s experience of the rape, this version is what I have to base my analysis on. In this sense, the rape is racially motivated.

The effect of the two rapes in *Disgrace* varies for several reasons. First of all, the narrator is crucial because his role determines what is conveyed. Failing to see the effect that his relationship to Melanie has on her, David Lurie gives this less attention. Consequently, his version of everything diminishes important aspects. The reader has to read between the lines in order to look past his actions. Submission is present in the rapes, both physically and psychologically. Melanie loses her strength like a marionette (D 19) and “die[s] within herself for the duration” (D 25). Physically she is always beneath him or averting herself, which reflects submission. Lurie is fooling himself when he is putting a romantic label on a perpetrator, calling himself “a servant of Eros” (D 52). As a result of her relationship to Lurie,

Melanie skips classes and is alienated from the people around her. Despite the fact that Lurie cannot see this clearly, her changed behaviour shows that she is truly affected by their affair and the subsequent rape. Lucy is also physically and psychologically scarred by the gang rape. She alienates herself from everyday life after the crime, and the people closest to her. As indicated already, she died within herself after being attacked by the three young men. Paradoxically, a child was conceived when Lucy felt like dying within. Not only was she emotionally scarred by the event, but the rape impregnated her as well. However, Lucy's story of the rape is intensified as she describes the act as filled with hate. If the rape of Lucy is a device used as a warning to keep her in her place, this is an extension of the gender aspect. During the act, she was subjugated. Unable to return to her old life, this happened on many levels. Thus, she and her child will visually represent the rape for the rest of her life.

The importance of the two events of sexual violence is determined by their consequences for the characters and the development of the plot. Coetzee reveals the power dynamics by portraying the same crime in different wrapping. He illustrates how sexual violence is present in all social spheres and layers, and how rape occurs within every race, gender and class. Thus, he encourages the reader to rethink his or her assumptions regarding sexual violence by pointing out the comprehensiveness in extent. Rape is rape, either way you put it. This goes for sexual violence both in the public and domestic spheres. *Disgrace* is a fictional social comment on South Africa's history of high prevalence of rape, in which Lurie is the narrative construction that enables us to view the features and attitudes of many men. In this manner, the United Nations' concern that sexual violence in South Africa "appears to be socially normalized, legitimized and accompanied by a culture of silence and impunity" ("South Africa must do more") is voiced and substantiated through David Lurie and his male colleagues in the committee hearing. Thus, Lurie's presentation of the rapes indicates the general attitude of other male characters, and by implication South African men, regarding the importance of the event. They are two sides of the same story, despite the fact that Lurie is negligent to his the rape of Melanie. In this manner, Coetzee identifies and conveys the socially normalized and negative attitudes around rape in South Africa. In addition, he highlights that rape is rape, either way you put it. The reader is therefore challenged to question our assumptions around sexual violence. Coetzee does therefore depict sexual violence in *Disgrace* as a complex and multifarious problem.

4 Conclusion

The objective of this thesis was to examine depictions of violence in Coetzee's *Waiting for the Barbarians* and *Disgrace*. I would now like to sum up and affirm my findings. As we have seen, both novels deal with complex and multifarious issues. After stating the context, purpose, and effect of violence in *Waiting for the Barbarians* and *Disgrace*, I intend to compare these aspects in my conclusion. First of all, I want to compare the context of violence in both novels. I will then do the same with torture and rape, including the purposes and effects of these manifestations of violence. In doing this we need to remind ourselves that effects are not necessarily a measurable result. However, I will try to affirm my findings considering all the aspects.

Written in a context of social and racial unrest, *Waiting for the Barbarians* was written and published during apartheid, and Coetzee was one of a few authors escaping censorship. In actual fact, the novel was one of the most important narratives written during apartheid. My discussion has emphasized the importance of setting in *Waiting for the Barbarians*: an unknown territory of an unnamed empire. As his home country has influenced Coetzee in much of his work, there can be a link in that sense. Nonetheless, influence can also have come from elsewhere, as different empires have ruled parts of the world throughout history. The harsh weather may indicate a location somewhere in the Northern hemisphere, but this is a wild guess. We should consider violence in *Waiting for the Barbarians* in general, because Coetzee depicts an unknown totalitarian regime. Torture could occur in any nation. The novel is situated at a frontier settlement ruled by the Empire. This settlement is also the place where violence occurs. Torture takes place and escalates in the same context, and it originates from paranoia and unspecified fear. Power dynamics corresponds with the instances of violence, and the hierarchical structures are deeply affected by the Empire as the definitive authority.

In contrast, the setting in *Disgrace* is more specific than that of *Waiting for the Barbarians* and closely linked to post-apartheid South Africa. In fact, the novel was written in South Africa only few years after the abandonment of apartheid. Despite being located in the same country, however, we have seen that the two rapes in *Disgrace* differ in context. While one of the rapes takes place in the city, the other is situated in rural South Africa. These places are also significantly different in that the liberal setting of the University in Cape Town is predominately white, while there is a majority of black residents in the countryside. In this

manner, the ethnic affiliations of the perpetrators are linked to the milieu in which the rapes are carried out. After the publication of *Disgrace* Coetzee was criticized for joining a tradition of apartheid narratives, i.e. that he portrayed racist stereotypes. He was accused of presenting a bleak South Africa, a nation that, at that time, embraced harmony and “the rainbow nation”. However, only one of the rapes is represented as racially motivated. The rape of Melanie Isaacs questions attitudes to gender equality and violence. Melanie Isaacs and Lucy Lurie are not ethnically affiliated with their rapists. This is an important aspect in conveying the plot in *Disgrace*, playing on and criticizing racist stereotypes at the same time.

If the purposes of violence are different in the two novels, there are alterations within each narrative as well. Examining the relationships between the Empire and the barbarians, the Empire and the Magistrate, and the Magistrate and the barbarian woman, I have shown that although the purposes of torture are several, they are connected by the same cause. In *Waiting for the Barbarians* violence tends to assume the shape of torture. The motivation behind the torture of the nomadic people, or the barbarians, is to get information about a possible barbarian attack. The nomadic people are accused of, and punished for, being barbarians. The defenders of the Empire are the executors of torture, driven by paranoia and an unspecified fear. Torture becomes a means justified by the cause when fighting a barbarian attack. Joll and Mandel manipulate the law, making torture more or less state-approved. In order to protect themselves from possible threats, the Empire embarks on a campaign along the frontier. The strategy behind the campaign appears to be that attack is the best defence. Accused of being an enemy of the state, the Magistrate is also tortured. At first, Colonel Joll and Warrant Officer Mandel try to force information out of him about the barbarian attack. As I hope to have shown, when this proves to be impossible, the purpose of torture changes. In a way, the Empire is trying to show that one man’s resistance does not stand a chance. Torture becomes a means of humiliating the Magistrate, thus sending a signal to the rest of the frontier people. Torture has therefore become a way of punishing the Magistrate for refusing to cooperate, making it a public statement.

In *Disgrace*, on the other hand, violence tends to assume the shape of rape. And the purposes behind the different rapes vary. The rape of Melanie is a gendered crime, where the motivation for rape lies with David Lurie’s want of sex. Having been a womanizer, he has to find new ways of acquiring sex as his looks are failing him. Being rejected by a prostitute prior to the professor-student affair, his ways of wooing women are becoming more and more

aggressive. After having been rejected by the prostitute, he initiates a relationship with one of his students. It ends with non-consensual sex. Despite the fact that the rape occurs across age and races, I have found no indications in the text that the rape was racially motivated. I believe Lurie simply prefers young coloured women. As Lurie is a narrative construction that enables us to view the attitudes of many men, this rape appears to be gendered. The pattern of seeking young coloured women thus seems to be based on his fondness for a certain type of women, and not racist views. In his relations with women, Lurie is, I conclude, a sexist.

In contrast to the rape of Melanie, the purpose behind Lucy's rape is racial. This second rape in the novel is that of Lucy, David Lurie's daughter. My discussion has suggested that the gang-rape by three young black men and boys could be gendered as well, because the rape of Lucy may be seen as a device used as a warning to keep her in her place. This is an extension of the gender aspect. However, Lucy's experience of the rape suggests otherwise. Due to the narrative ellipsis in which the rape occurs, readers cannot judge for themselves and are therefore forced to rely on Lucy's experience of it. A short time after the rape she comments on how she felt an intense hatred from her rapists, and how the rape was loaded with aggression. As we are only presented with her version of the rape, it is this version, and the possible purpose linked to it, that we can take into consideration. Lucy accepts her destiny, being under the impression that the rapists were collecting debt. I thus conclude that Lucy connects her rape to the history of apartheid.

As regards the effects of torture in *Waiting for the Barbarians*, the immediate effect on the barbarians is that they are alienated and manifested as different from the people of the Empire. Being tortured, they are consequently "othered" from their own social group. However, the barbarians had been othered before they were marched through the gates of the frontier settlement. It was not torture that othered them, torture was merely an emphasis and public reinforcement of the barbarian construct. This is evident as they are accused of being barbarians and automatically branded as enemies of the state. Torture is an intensification of alienation. The effect is illustrated when the barbarian woman twists her finger during a conversation with the Magistrate. My interpretation of this gesture is that she is signalling how she has been broken or disfigured as a consequence of torture. Thus, she has been made into something new, different from the frontier people and her own kin. She too has been othered and alienated. This is evident as she is uncertain whether she will be accepted or not by her kin on her return.

Discussing the second case of torture, that of Joll and Mandel torturing the Magistrate, we have seen that the Magistrate is immediately alienated, made different, and humiliated within his own social group. Isolation and pain turn him into a travelling beast, miles away from the person he used to be. Thus the effect of torture is as immense as it is unpredictable. The difference between the victims of torture is that while the nomadic people's identity was different from the beginning, even before Joll set his eyes on them, the Magistrate's identity changes. Considering changing his position, he does not join the nomadic people in rank. Being both an oppressor and an oppressed, he is balancing somewhere in between. The Magistrate went from being the administrator of a town to a travelling old man. As the soldiers of the Empire leave, he returns to his position. But he has been weakened. He is simply not the same after torture.

In the Magistrate's relationship to the barbarian woman, there is no torture or violence. Yet there is still an uneven power relationship. Their complex relationship is similar to the relationships between the Empire and the barbarians, as well as between the Empire and the Magistrate. They illustrate the same power structures. Their uneasy and increasingly precarious relationship shows how the Magistrate is an oppressor and an oppressed at the same time, and how imperialist attitudes are internalized. To a much less violent degree, but significant nonetheless, the Magistrate has participated in the colonization of the barbarian woman. He is, I conclude, more complicit in the suppressing and controlling mechanisms of empire than he likes to think – perhaps even more than he dares to admit to himself.

When it comes to the effects of rape in *Disgrace*, they are to some extent comparable to each other and to the effects of violence in *Waiting for the Barbarians*. Being victims of non-consensual intercourse, Melanie and Lucy are affected in similar ways. Even though psychological overpowering marks Melanie's rape, and even though Lucy's rape is filled with hatred and physical overpowering, both become alienated. Melanie skips classes, and avoids her friends. After the rape, she seeks comfort and sleeps over at Lurie's place. This development is not evident at first, because the reader follows Lurie's reflections. However, textual signals reveal how strongly their affair and the rape affect her. The effects on Lucy after experiencing rape are remarkably similar to Melanie's. Melanie skips classes, while Lucy is unable to return to work. Lurie goes to the market and the kennel for her, as she is not capable of returning to her social life. She also locks herself into her bedroom, avoiding her friends and father. Being unable to socialize or communicate with her father, Lucy and Lurie

resort to letter correspondence. To summarize the effects of sexual violence in *Disgrace*, both Melanie and Lucy are “othered”. Rape makes them different from everybody else, a crime that is presented in different wrapping.

As the contexts and effects of violence within *Waiting for the Barbarians* are somewhat similar to both cases of torture, the purposes of violence are significant to note. In *Disgrace*, on the other hand, the rapes differ in contexts. Nevertheless, the purposes of sexual violence are still most noteworthy. Comparing the two novels, we can see how Coetzee shows the variations of relationships in terms of context, purpose, and effect. He uses different narrative instruments of treating and examining various issues. These issues include the relationships between people, abuse of power, and communication problems. Such problems exist both in South Africa and worldwide. Concerning context, they are different as the setting in the first novel is unknown and general, while *Disgrace* is closely linked to, and inseparable from, post-apartheid South Africa.

On the matter of purpose of violence, violence is expressed through torture and rape. These are different crimes, but they are ultimately connected as they are exercised on human beings and cause a great deal of pain. In this manner, context and purpose differ very considerably. Yet the effects of violence are similar. The victims of torture and the victims of rape are alienated and consequently humiliated within their own social group. They are also othered by the executors of violence, i.e. made different. As an overall concluding comment, depictions of violence in *Waiting for the Barbarians* and *Disgrace* share both similarities and differences. They differ in contexts and purposes, and through narrative strategies. The novels are, however, joined by how violence affects people. The emotional and physical consequences of violence are similar in both cases. Even though there are differences in plot and variations of relations among the characters, there is a presence of overall lines that interlink the narratives’ thematic issues and reveal their ideological tensions. Moreover, as I hope to have shown, the significance of power display becomes the common denominator both in *Waiting for the Barbarians* and in *Disgrace*.

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